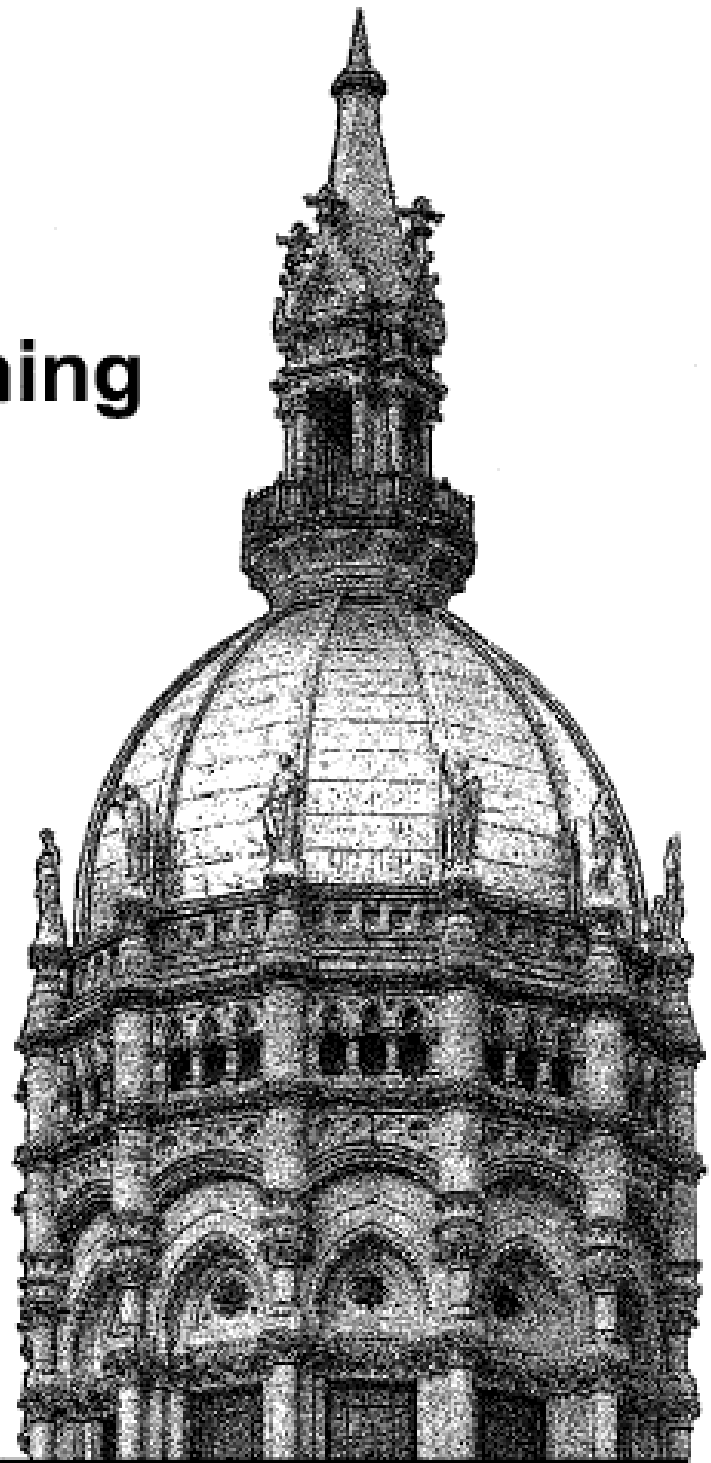


Connecticut's Regional Planning Organizations

December 2007



PRI

**Legislative Program Review and
Investigations Committee**

Connecticut General Assembly

**CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY
LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE**

The Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee is a joint, bipartisan, statutory committee of the Connecticut General Assembly. It was established in 1972 to evaluate the efficiency, effectiveness, and statutory compliance of selected state agencies and programs, recommending remedies where needed. In 1975, the General Assembly expanded the committee's function to include investigations, and during the 1977 session added responsibility for "sunset" (automatic program termination) performance reviews. The committee was given authority to raise and report bills in 1985.

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Scott M. Simoneau, Principal Analyst
Michelle Riordan, Legislative Analyst II
Janelle Sagness, Legislative Analyst II
Bonnine T. Labbadia, Executive Secretary

Project Staff

Maryellen Duffy
Anne E. McAloon

STATE CAPITOL ROOM 506

HARTFORD, CT 06106

(860) 240-0300

Email: pri@cga.ct.gov

www.cga.ct.gov/pri/index.htm

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW
& INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE

Connecticut's
Regional Planning Organizations

DECEMBER 2007

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Executive Summary

Connecticut's Regional Planning Organizations

In April 2007, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee voted to study Connecticut's Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs). The focus of the study was on understanding the activities currently undertaken by each of the 15 RPOs, identifying additional services they might provide in the future, and suggesting ways to encourage regional collaboration among municipalities.

The overall goal of the recommendations adopted by the program review committee on December 20, 2007, was to encourage towns to continue to address issues through Regional Planning Organizations in order to foster the growth and development of regional activities in the state. The committee's findings and recommendations focused on three broad areas:

- the role, structure, and boundaries of Regional Planning Organizations;
- the relationship of the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to the continued growth of regionalism in Connecticut; and
- the use of state funding as a means of increasing regional activities.

Study Methodology

During the course of the study, a variety of state agencies and organizations interested in regionalism were contacted for their perspective on the current and future role of RPOs in Connecticut. During the early months of the study, committee staff also visited the office of each of the 15 RPOs, interviewing the executive director, and in some cases, other staff and board members as well. In September 2007, the committee held a public hearing at which 16 people spoke or submitted testimony related to the topic of Regional Planning Organizations, including a panel presentation by the staff and board members of eight of the RPOs.

Another mechanism used to obtain information was a questionnaire sent to the chief elected officials in the state's 169 towns. The survey asked for their opinions regarding the roles, responsibilities, and current performance of the RPOs in their region, and what future tasks, if any, they would like those RPOs to undertake. A total of 101 of 169 surveys were returned, for a response rate of 60 percent.

Regional Planning Organizations

Regional Planning Organizations are statutorily authorized regional entities voluntarily established by the municipalities located within the 15 state-defined planning regions. There are three types: Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs), Regional Councils of Elected Officials (RCEOs), and Regional Councils of Governments (RCOGs).

The primary statutory responsibilities of all three types of RPOs are the same. However, with the exception of transportation planning, which already has a regional focus, and a few

state-mandated responsibilities related to conservation and development planning, most of the activities performed by each RPO are at the direction of their member towns.

The boundaries of the regions that the current 15 RPOs represent were developed by the state in the 1950s, based on an examination of a variety of factors and consultation with officials in the various regions. Since then, changes in the economy of Connecticut, housing patterns, environmental concerns, and technology in general have occurred and are continuing to occur. OPM has statutory authority to designate or redesignate logical planning regions within the state, but the only change since the 1970s has been the assignment of a previously unaffiliated town to a specific RPO. Municipal chief elected officials who responded to the program review survey overwhelmingly supported periodic re-examination of the planning regions. Given these factors, the program review committee believes OPM should be required to reexamine the boundaries of the state's planning regions periodically.

Issue of Regionalism

The need to address certain public policy issues on a regional versus an individual town basis has been recognized in Connecticut since the 1940s when the state legislature authorized the creation of regional planning agencies. In recent years, there has been growing interest nationally and in Connecticut in expanding efforts to plan and act on a regional basis. There are two major reasons: recognition that land use planning needs to occur in a more methodical and integrated manner in order to preserve the character of the state and reduce sprawl; and a realization that service sharing arrangements can achieve cost savings. Although most towns in Connecticut have embraced the use of regional entities for some purposes, there is less support for state-imposed joint efforts.

In its survey of municipal chief elected officials, the program review committee found there is no consensus on whether the state should build the capacity of RPOs to undertake state-mandated tasks on a region-wide basis. In addition, there is no agreement on whether certain land use decisions should be shifted away from municipalities to regional or state government. Most of those interviewed acknowledged that regional planning is important, and increasing collaboration among towns for the provision of certain services would be more cost efficient. However, almost all local officials opposed the idea of the state imposing mandates that would require specific functions and activities to be regionalized.

If towns are reluctant to readily participate in regional endeavors, the state can take action in four ways: offer incentives; impose sanctions; mandate specific activities be regionalized; or perform the activity itself. Over the years, the objective of state legislation in Connecticut related to regionalism has been to encourage, rather than require, towns to jointly cooperate. Thus, a major challenge for state policy makers is to balance regional needs that facilitate the long-term development of the state, with the long-held preference of retaining control and decision-making at the local level of government.

Plans of Development

Conservation and development plans are used at all levels of government to provide a vision and general idea of how land should be used to assure public health, safety, and welfare.

In Connecticut, conservation and development planning is statutorily mandated at the local, regional, and state level. The Regional Plan of Development, as the middle ground between the individual Municipal Conservation and Development Plans and the State Plan of Conservation and Development (State C&D Plan), is an important mechanism to balance local interests with the overall goals of the state. Although regional plans are purely advisory, they are key documents that link together towns with common interests, while supporting the overall goals of the State C&D Plan. Although a Regional Planning Organization must submit its proposed Regional Plan of Development to the secretary of OPM for findings to determine if the proposed plan is “not inconsistent” with the State Plan of Conservation and Development, the committee found no formal criteria existed to conduct such a review.

State statutes require that RPOs be notified about, and in some cases comment on, certain types of projects occurring within a region. Legislation has been raised since 1979 to allow RPOs to either comment on projects of regional significance or actually approve them, but in neither case has such authority been granted. The committee believes that allowing RPOs to comment on such projects would provide a broader perspective on development that occurs in one town, but has an impact beyond that town’s border, and those comments should be discussed in the context of the goals contained in the relevant Regional Plan of Development.

Regional Performance Incentive Program

Public Act 07-239 established a Regional Performance Incentive Program with an allocation of \$8.6 million to support regional cooperation. Under the act, RPOs are encouraged to submit proposals for joint provision of services that are currently provided by towns within the region of the RPO but not currently provided on a regional basis. There has been widespread interest in the program, with 11 of the 15 RPOs submitting proposals and 129 towns participating in one or more of them. Several other states in the Northeast also operate similar programs. The program review committee believes the idea is a good one, but a few modifications should be made in the existing program.

Recommendations

The Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee adopted the following recommendations:

- 1. All three types of Regional Planning Organizations currently allowed under Connecticut law -- Regional Planning Agencies, Regional Councils of Elected Officials, and Regional Councils of Governments -- should continue to be authorized.**
- 2. Chapter 50, Part IV, of the Connecticut General Statutes shall be amended to add a definition of the term “Regional Planning Organization.” The definition shall specify that the term collectively includes Regional Planning Agencies, Regional Councils of Elected Officials, and Regional Councils of Governments established under the provisions of Chapters 50 and 127 of the statutes.**
- 3. C.G.S. Sec. 4-124h shall be amended to specify that a legally established Regional Council of Elected Officials can exercise all of the powers of a Regional Council of Governments as defined in Chapter 50 of the statutes.**

4. **Regional Planning Agencies shall be required to establish a mechanism for meeting with the chief elected officials of their member towns at least quarterly to communicate information about region-wide issues. The mechanism shall be established by January 1, 2009.**
5. **At least every 20 years, the Office of Policy and Management shall conduct an analysis of the boundaries of the state-defined logical planning areas in Connecticut and adopt new boundaries, if appropriate, based on that analysis. As part of its review, OPM shall develop criteria that will examine the influence of urban centers on neighboring towns in the context of current trends related to economic development and the environment, including characteristics such as housing patterns, employment levels, commuting patterns for the most widely held job classifications in the state, traffic patterns on major roadways, local perceptions of social and historic ties, and environmental considerations. OPM shall also include a measure that takes into consideration the size of the proposed regions (e.g., the number of towns, total population, and/or total square mileage), with the goal of establishing a minimum size for logical planning areas.**

The first analysis of the regions under this new system should be completed by October 1, 2009, with any revision of boundaries taking effect by July 1, 2010.

6. **In preparing the 2010 revision of the State Plan of Conservation and Development, the Office of Policy and Management shall:**
 - **for each policy contained in the plan:**
 - **assign a priority to it;**
 - **provide an estimate of the level of funding needed to implement it and identify the potential source(s) of funding;**
 - **set time-frame(s) for implementation; and**
 - **identify the entity or entities responsible for implementation;**
 - **for each of the six growth management principles, include a minimum of three benchmarks, one of which shall be financial, to measure progress towards implementation of the plan.**
7. **The Office of Policy and Management shall develop criteria for the uniform review of Regional Plans of Development submitted to it in order to determine whether they are consistent with the State Plan of Conservation and Development.**
8. **The name of the Regional Plan of Development shall be changed to the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development.**
9. **Regional Planning Organizations shall be given the statutory authority to comment on “projects of regional significance” that will be located in one town but will impact other towns in the region, or that are located in a town in another region but the town is contiguous to the region. The criteria for comment shall include analysis of the project’s compliance with the Regional Development Plan as well as other issues the Regional Planning Organizations believe are critical to the analysis. Notice shall be provided to a Regional Planning Organization not later than 30 days before the public**

hearing to be held by the town where the project will be located. The RPO shall study any such proposal and shall report its findings and recommendations to the zoning commission at or before the hearing. The report of the RPO shall be advisory, but it shall be made a part of the record of such hearing. If the RPO does not submit a report at or before the hearing, it shall be presumed that it does not disapprove of the project.

The Office of Policy and Management, in consultation with the Interagency Steering Council established by Executive Order No. 15, shall develop regulations that define the term “projects of regional significance” and the criteria that would initiate a review of such projects by a Regional Planning Organization. The criteria used to define “projects of regional significance” shall address, but not be limited to, such factors as project location, type, (such as energy, transportation, major infrastructure, water, or open space), and scope (size).

10. The Regional Performance Incentive Program shall:

- be established as an ongoing program;
- include criteria to be developed by OPM for evaluating proposals;
and
- give a preference to proposals that encompass region-wide efforts.

Based on the review of applications submitted in December 2007, the Office of Policy and Management should develop proposed substitute language for operation of the program in the future if necessary to overcome barriers identified as preventing projects of a regional nature from being established.

Introduction

In Connecticut, Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs) are statutorily authorized entities voluntarily established by towns within 15 state-defined logical planning regions. All but one municipality in the state is a member of a Regional Planning Organization. (See Figure I-3 for a map showing the boundaries of the regions.)

There are three types of RPOs -- Regional Councils of Elected Officials (RCEOs), Regional Councils of Governments (RCOGs), and Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs). All have similar duties, which can be summarized as:

- providing a forum for intermunicipal discussion of a variety of issues affecting member towns;
- facilitating preparation of a regional development plan that considers a broad range of matters including land use, housing, economic development, the environment, recreational areas, and public utilities;
- reviewing and commenting on various matters related to land use, including certain zone use and subdivision changes as well as local and state conservation and development plans;
- performing transportation planning activities related to federal funding; and
- assisting member towns with specific tasks identified by the towns, including coordination of regional purchasing opportunities and service sharing agreements.

In April 2007, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee voted to study Connecticut's Regional Planning Organizations. The focus of the study was on understanding the activities currently undertaken by each of the 15 RPOs, identifying additional services they might provide in the future, suggesting ways to encourage regional collaboration among municipalities, and indicating whether a particular model exists that fosters the concept of regionalism.

Summary of Study Issues

The need to address specific public policy issues on a regional versus individual town basis has been gaining momentum nationally and in Connecticut. This trend is based on the understanding that a joint approach to common problems is often necessary. Over the last few years in Connecticut, there has been increased interest among state policy leaders in supporting greater regional cooperation, primarily for two reasons.

The first is a recognition that land use planning needs to occur in a more methodical and integrated manner in order to preserve the character of the state and reduce sprawl. State law requires conservation and development planning take place at the state, regional, and local levels of government, although the state and regional plans are largely advisory. Under Connecticut's

“home rule” system, the right to regulate local land use rests with the towns. As discussed in the current State Plan of Conservation and Development (State C&D Plan):

[t]o a certain degree, municipal land use decisions can be influenced by state infrastructure plans and capital investments in transportation facilities, public water supply and sewer lines, sewage treatment plant upgrades, and property acquisitions for open space and other restricted development purposes.¹

However, ultimately municipal development decisions are made by local leaders in Connecticut’s 169 towns.

Neither RPOs nor state government currently have the authority to overrule land use decisions made at the local level. Because of this autonomy, towns do not have to follow conservation and development plans that are prepared at the state and regional level. In response to this situation, state level efforts are focused increasingly on linking state funding for capital and infrastructure projects with promotion of Responsible Growth at the local level. Rather than changing authority for land use decisions, the state is trying to discourage decisions that are not compatible with the State Plan of Conservation and Development.

Recently, both the governor and the legislature introduced stricter planning requirements at all levels of government. However, neither suggested the overturn of municipal home rule authority regarding land use decisions nor shifting that authority to RPOs or the state.

In October 2006, Governor M. Jodi Rell issued Executive Order No. 15 declaring that the state needs to “actively steer the continued growth and development of our state to prevent sprawling development patterns from forever changing the character of our communities.” The order created the Office of Responsible Growth (ORG) within the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to help the state and towns achieve that goal. During the 2007 legislative session, the Connecticut General Assembly adopted Public Act 07-239, “An Act Concerning Responsible Growth,” building on the governor’s initiative and promoting regional service sharing arrangements. A key provision of the act establishes a Regional Performance Incentive Program (RPIP).

These activities and Connecticut’s focus on responsible growth are in keeping with similar efforts occurring nationally. In recent years, there has been growing interest in a concept referred to as “Smart Growth.” While the term can be defined in a variety of ways, the broad elements usually include:

- recognition of the connection between development and quality of life, including the value of mixed uses (i.e., jobs, housing, and retail within near proximity of each other);
- preservation of open space and, correspondingly, a desire to restore city centers and older suburbs whenever possible;

¹ Office of Policy and Management, Intergovernmental Policy Division, *Conservation and Development: Policies Plan for Connecticut, 2005-2010*, p. 1.

- the importance of pedestrian oriented communities that have access to public transportation; and
- the existence of a plan for development, based on a thoughtful process that considers the future needs and existing resources of a region.²

The concept of responsible growth in Connecticut seeks to achieve similar goals. Implementation of these concepts will require support from all levels of government (i.e., state, local, and federal) as well as the private sector (i.e., developers and local citizens). As specific efforts in Connecticut move forward, RPOs can be important participants in the process of achieving responsible growth. Their longstanding presence in their regions as organizations that enable municipal leaders to discuss issues of common interest and seek solutions in a cooperative atmosphere will be a valuable resource.

The second reason for increased interest in regionalism in Connecticut is a realization that service sharing arrangements can achieve cost savings. This is important as municipalities face increasing pressure to control local budgets and contain rising property taxes. Ideally, rather than 169 towns independently providing the same services to their residents or purchasing the same product, two or more towns could jointly share a service or gain volume discounts for joint purchasing. Because of these cost savings, such efforts help towns maintain the service levels they deliver to their residents.

Although efforts to regionalize have been underway in Connecticut for more than 50 years, the number and range of activities undertaken regionally has increased considerably in recent years. Towns are working together, often through the RPOs, to buy equipment, operate animal shelters, promote recreational facilities, plan for natural disasters and other emergencies, protect the environment, and administer transit programs. Projects that involve working with private parties jointly to develop a specific parcel of land or operate a regional facility are much more limited. In any case, the extent to which individual towns or groups of neighboring towns are embracing regionalism varies, and efforts to expand regionalism in Connecticut should be considered within the context of existing beliefs and practices.

The characteristics of a group purchasing or service delivery effort are important factors in a town's decision to regionalize that activity. Often, towns are more willing to work jointly with others when the services to be provided are those that do not involve direct contact between the town and its citizens. This includes activities in the areas of information technology, the processing of bills, and property tax revaluation assessments. Other popular efforts focus on opportunities for towns to obtain enhanced services at the same cost as going it alone. These types of projects include joint purchasing of office supplies and employment training programs. A third category with strong potential for a regional approach is recruitment of personnel for jobs that are difficult to fill because of a shortage of skilled workers or the need to combine tasks among several towns in order to create a full-time position.

Another factor affecting the willingness of towns to enter into regional ventures is the number of other entities that will be involved. Some smaller towns fear they will lose their

² Lin Ye, Sumedha Mandpe and Peter B. Meyer, "What is 'Smart Growth?' -- Really?", *Journal of Planning Literature*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (February 2005).

identity within a group of larger towns, while larger towns may worry that their concerns will be lost in the diversity of issues raised by a large number of smaller towns. The fact that the 15 RPOs currently operating in Connecticut have good working relationships among most of their members would suggest these concerns can be resolved.

In some towns, local officials are concerned about a loss of autonomy, if their town joins an effort they cannot control completely. They worry that even if they agree with a decision now, in the future they might find their town is required to give up revenue or provide a service or an increased level of service that they would not have chosen. An example of this situation is the purchase of group health insurance for employees. The entity representing the region may negotiate a more generous package of benefits than the town wants to provide. Even though the cost of those benefits might be the same initially as the amount the town was paying for more limited benefits (due to the group purchasing discount), in the future the town might find it difficult to reduce benefits, if the price rises.

The other side of the issue of costs concerns the willingness of the citizens of a town to pay higher taxes in order to receive more benefits. Theoretically, all towns want to save money, if they can. Sometimes though, the cost of a particular structure or service is not high enough for town residents to be willing to make a change in the frequency or the scope of that project, even if it would save money. For example, people often prefer to use a library within their own community or visit their local town hall for required permits and licenses.

In those types of situations, the property tax burden on the individuals in the town that goes it alone can become very heavy. However, until the town reaches a financial tipping point where efforts to balance the provision of services with the cost of those services cannot be maintained, there may be little desire to seek out a regional solution. Only then will the town and its citizens be ready to give up some independence and join together with other towns for the provision of goods and services in order to stabilize or reduce local property taxes.

In the case of towns that are reluctant to readily participate in regional endeavors, the state can take action in four ways. It can offer incentives, which would be primarily financial, but could include technical assistance. At the same time, or as an alternative, the state could impose sanctions in the form of disqualification for a wide range of state grants or the imposition of a fee for acting alone. (These choices are sometimes referred to as the “carrot or stick” approach.) Another approach would be to mandate certain activities or functions that are currently performed on a town-by-town basis be regionalized. Finally, the state could perform the activity itself.

The availability of financial incentives might motivate towns to join cooperative efforts, but new money is not always the answer. Towns may be willing to forego cost savings in order to be able to locate a building where they want it or continue the provision of a service in the way they want. For example, financial incentives to encourage towns to form regional Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) have had mixed results. Some towns that receive few “911” calls are still reluctant to eliminate the job of the employee who currently handles that function. In such cases, it may be necessary for the state to threaten to eliminate access to all state funds for that program in order to get a town to participate in a regional center with neighboring towns.

The decision about what sanctions to impose and when to impose them should be considered in the context of the goals of the particular program. Harsh penalties in areas where the returns are small run the risk of generating resentment toward the targeted effort and a general loss in the level of goodwill achieved to date through voluntary regional efforts.

As Connecticut seeks to achieve greater regionalism in the area of government activities, the state must decide whether the nature and pace of the efforts currently underway are moving in the right direction, or whether stronger mandates or sanctions are needed. Many of the actions being taken to encourage more detailed discussions about how to implement the responsible growth principles, to promote greater regional awareness about land use issues and encourage service sharing arrangements through RPOs, and to examine how state investment dollars can influence conservation and development efforts at the local level and whether land use laws, policies, or programs need to be changed are just getting underway. Therefore, the program review committee believes it is appropriate to allow some additional time to pass to see if the results of those efforts are successful. Consequently, instead of recommending a single regional model, the committee is proposing a series of revisions that modify elements of the Regional Planning Organizations, the role of OPM in regional efforts, and the use of state funding as a means of increasing regional activities. Chapter Seven contains a more detailed discussion of the issues related to regionalism and includes all of the committee's recommendations.

Methodology

Information about Regional Planning Organizations was obtained from a variety of sources. Program review staff read historic materials (e.g., annual reports, plans, and histories) prepared by individual RPOs as well as the associations that have represented the RPOs over the years, viewed the web sites of the 13 RPOs that have web pages, and reviewed the most recent financial audit that each RPO filed with OPM. Committee staff also visited the office of each of the 15 RPOs, interviewing the executive director, and in some cases, other staff and board members as well.

In conjunction with two other program review studies, an electronic survey was sent to the chief elected officials of all municipalities in the state. The section of the survey related to the RPO study included questions about why towns belong to RPOs, what functions RPOs should perform, who should serve on the boards of directors, and what the state should do to encourage more regional cooperation. A total of 101 of 169 forms were returned, for a response rate of 60 percent. (See Chapter Six for a summary of the responses to the questions.)

During the course of the study, program review committee staff spoke with nonpartisan staff from other legislative offices (i.e., Office of Fiscal Analysis, Office of Legislative Research, and Legislative Commissioners Office). Committee staff also met with employees of the Office of Policy and Management, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and the Department of Transportation (ConnDOT), the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM), the Connecticut Organization of Small Towns (COST), and the Regional Plan Association as well as a representative of the Connecticut chapter of the American Planning Association.

Program review staff attended several bi-monthly meetings of OPM and the RPOs, which were followed by meetings of the Connecticut Association of Regional Planning Organizations (CARPO), as well as meetings of the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR) and the Responsible Growth Task Force. Committee staff also attended: in March, a legislative forum on Smart Growth Policy Trends; in April, a community forum on the regional collaboration project “People, Prosperity, and Place;” in July, the annual meeting of 1000 Friends of Connecticut; in October, a half-day Shared Services Symposium sponsored by OPM, ACIR, and the League of Women Voters of Connecticut; and in December, a regional forum on the state’s economic strategic plan sponsored by the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD).

On September 25, 2007, the program review committee held a public hearing regarding the issues in this and two other studies. A total of 16 people spoke or submitted testimony related to the topic of Regional Planning Organizations, including a panel presentation by the staff and board members of eight of the RPOs.

Information about the history of the RPOs was obtained from the legislative record, previous studies of RPOs in Connecticut, and conversations with individuals involved in the creation of logical planning regions in Connecticut. Various national sources and literature about regional government, conservation and development planning and its relationship to Smart Growth efforts, and joint purchasing efforts were also examined.

Report Content

The report has seven chapters. The first provides a history of the development of Regional Planning Organizations in the state, while the second describes OPM’s role in promoting regional initiatives. Chapter Three explains the types of RPOs allowed in Connecticut and compares and contrasts their activities, while Chapter Four examines the resources of the RPOs. The fifth chapter discusses conservation and development planning at the local, regional, and state levels of government. Chapter Six summarizes the results of the questionnaire sent to municipal chief elected officials. Chapter Seven contains the program review committee’s findings and recommendations.

Appendix A lists the mission statement of the 15 RPOs. Appendix B summarizes statutory notification and review requirements involving RPOs, while Appendix C describes legislative changes to the State C&D Plan process since 1971. Appendix D contains a copy of the survey instrument sent to municipal chief elected officials. Appendix E provides data about the volume of cooperative activity pursued by individual towns in Connecticut; Appendix F compares the state grant programs for shared municipal services available in four other states.

Agency Responses

It is the policy of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee to provide agencies subject to a study with an opportunity to review and comment on the recommendations prior to publication of the final report, if they choose. For this study, that opportunity was offered to OPM and to the 15 RPOs (through their advocacy group CARPO). Appendix G contains the responses from both entities.

Chapter One

Evolution of Regional Planning Organizations in Connecticut

Under current state law, there are three types of Regional Planning Organizations. All have the same authority with respect to regional planning activities, but they differ slightly with regard to the range of other responsibilities they have. In terms of day-to-day tasks, most activities performed by RPOs are at the direction of their member towns, not the state. The RPOs have limited authority to direct actions on the part of their member towns -- their statutory authority is primarily advisory.

The three alternatives evolved over time, as interests and concerns about land use and economic development within the state changed. The type of Regional Planning Organization that exists within a specific region is decided upon by the member towns, not the state. Thus, a mixture of the three types exists throughout Connecticut today.

Figure I-1 lists the key dates related to the statutory creation of each of the types of Regional Planning Organizations currently used in Connecticut. The remainder of this chapter traces the evolution of legislative efforts to encourage local planning and authorize entities to carry out regional planning and other functions.

Initial Entities

In Connecticut, state authorization for local planning and zoning began early in the 20th century. In 1917, towns were given authority to create town planning commissions to map and plan for public buildings, highways, streets, and building lines. In 1925, towns were authorized to establish zoning authorities to regulate the height and size of buildings, the proportion of a lot that could be occupied, and the size of yards and open-spaces.

In 1939, an 11-member, state commission called the Connecticut Development Commission (CDC) was created to study conditions affecting Connecticut business, agricultural, and residential facilities, gather information about natural and economic resources of the state, and promote and encourage the location and development of new facilities within the state. This new commission also included a division to assist local governments with planning and zoning programs.

By 1947, state law began requiring towns with planning commissions to adopt municipal plans of development. Each plan had to be based on studies of local physical, social, economic, and governmental conditions and be designed to promote coordinated development and the general welfare and prosperity of the people in the town. The plan could include planning commission recommendations regarding the most desirable use of land in the town, the most desirable population density, and the location of objects such as bridges, streets, airports, parks, public buildings, and utilities. In addition, the commission could make other recommendations it thought would be beneficial to the town.

Figure I-1. Evolution of Regional Planning Organizations in Conn. -- Key Legislative Dates

1947	Contiguous towns may form Regional Planning Authority (RPA) , which must prepare plan of development for region within its jurisdiction; representation based on population, with appointments made by planning commission of each member town
1955	Towns forming RPA no longer need be contiguous, but all must be within same planning region, as defined by Connecticut Development Commission (CDC)
1959	RPA now means Regional Planning Agency ; CDC given authority to define and <u>redefine</u> planning regions
1965	Two or more towns within any planning region defined by CDC may establish Regional Council of Elected Officials (RCEO) , which is to consider matters of public nature common to two or more members as well as promote cooperative arrangements and coordinate action among members; elected chief executive represents member town on council
1971	Regional Council of Elected Officials in region without a Regional Planning Agency is authorized to exercise all the powers of such an agency
1971	60%+ of towns within any planning region defined by CDC may establish Regional Council of Governments (RCOG) , which is entitled to exercise all rights/authority and is subject to all responsibilities/duties of Regional Planning Agencies and Regional Councils of Elected Officials; RCOG must establish Regional Planning Commission (RPC) as subdivision responsible for all planning duties/responsibilities, including regional plan of development; chief elected official represents member town on council, while representative to RPC must be elector of town who serves on that town's planning commission [Per 1973 Special Act, Hartford has three additional seats on council and on commission]
1976	Two or more RPAs may establish interagency committees to recommend policies on matters of interregional nature and may share staff
1977	OPM given responsibility for defining/redefining planning regions as well as other functions related to regional planning organizations
1978	Formula for distributing State Grant-in-Aid payments to regional planning organizations codified
2000	RCOG no longer required to have a Regional Planning Commission carry out its planning duties/responsibilities

Source: LPR&IC

Regional Planning Authorities. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Connecticut grew rapidly. The population increased from 1.75 million in 1940 to 2.5 million in 1959, making Connecticut the fourth most densely populated state in the country. In the 1950s alone, there was a 24 percent increase in the number of dwelling units in the state, a 33 percent increase in the number of motor vehicles, and an 18 percent increase in the number of non-agricultural jobs. By

1958, nearly 82 percent of the state's population lived in the 50 largest municipalities, which represented only one-quarter of the state's land area.³

In 1947, the General Assembly enacted legislation allowing two or more contiguous towns with planning commissions to form a Regional Planning Authority. Representation on the authority board would be proportional, with each member town getting two seats on the board and additional representatives if the town population exceeded 25,000 people. All town representatives were to be appointed by the local planning commission. The jurisdiction of each RPA would match the boundaries of the towns that actually joined the RPA.

Each RPA would have to prepare a plan of development for its region based on the same types of studies required for a municipal plan of development, with recommendations for the general use of the area and other matters deemed beneficial to the area. RPAs also were to assist the planning commissions of member towns in carrying out the regional plan.

Initially, only one group of towns took advantage of this opportunity. In 1948, a few municipalities in the New Haven area formed the Regional Planning Authority of South Central Connecticut. Some towns in other parts of the state also joined together informally to work on regional planning, but no others organized as a RPA.

Interest in a more formal regional approach to planning and the establishment of more RPAs continued growing in Connecticut, but two unrelated events in the mid-1950s are often cited as spurring action. First, in 1954, federal grants became available that would pay for up to half the cost of planning work in metropolitan and regional areas. However, the only eligible recipients were official regional planning agencies.

Second, in August 1955, deadly flooding in the state affected people and property in 39 towns, especially near the Farmington, Naugatuck, and Quinnebaug Rivers. Nearly 100 people were killed, and property damage topped \$203 million (the equivalent of \$1.5 billion today). More flooding in October of that year killed 17 people and caused \$20 million in damage in 60 towns. These incidents highlighted the need for comprehensive regional plans that would identify future infrastructure needs and provide guidance for development during reconstruction following a natural disaster as well as during periods of rapid economic expansion.

Consequently, in 1955, during the regular legislative session and a special November session, changes were made in the procedures for establishing a Regional Planning Authority. Instead of contiguous towns that could potentially stretch irregularly in several directions, member towns now had to be located within the same "logical economic and planning regions of the state." The intent of this change was:

[t]o insure the economic and orderly development of the state through the encouragement of sound community and regional planning and the proper utilization of the zoning police powers at the municipal level of government⁴

³ Connecticut Development Commission, *Progress Toward Regional Planning in Connecticut* (1959), Chapter 1.

⁴ Chapter 161, Sec. N178, November, 1955, Supplement (Special Session, November 1955), p. 81.

The Connecticut Development Commission was given responsibility for defining the planning regions. CDC also was authorized to promote and assist with the formation of local and regional planning agencies and provide technical assistance to towns and regional areas regarding their functions.

Process for Defining Planning Regions

According to CDC documents, early in the process of developing “logical economic and planning regions,” the commission determined that the regions:

- be “clearly identifiable with local objectives and local problems” since town participation in a Regional Planning Authority had to be voted on by each local legislative body;
- include one or more municipalities serving as an urban center and the surrounding municipalities;
- include towns likely to develop strong relationships to the urban center in the future; and
- be based on existing municipal boundaries (i.e., no town would be split into more than one region).⁵

In order to define the new statutorily required logical planning regions, CDC developed a six-step process, which is summarized in Figure I-2. Work on the first step began in the summer of 1957.

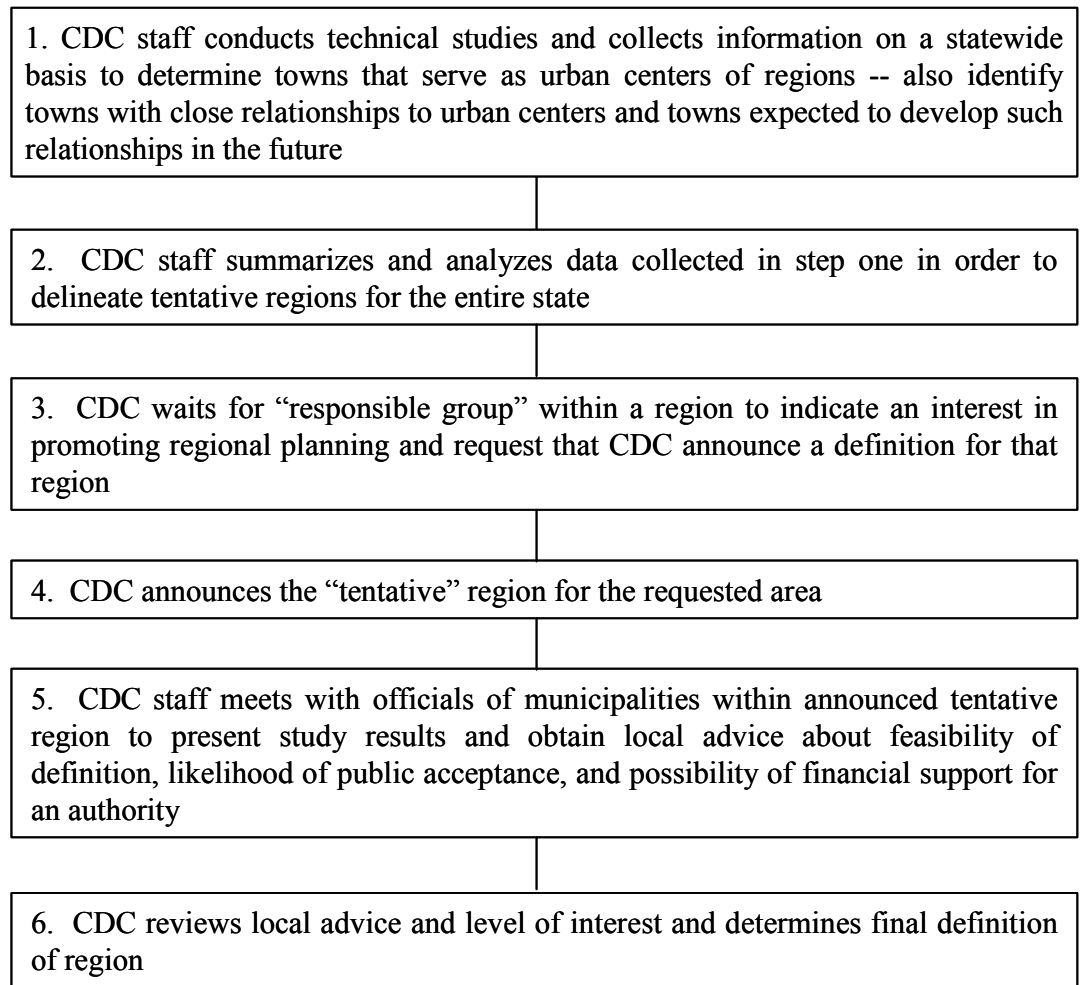
During the first step in the process, CDC staff compiled data about the characteristics of the 169 towns in the state, focusing on population, employment, retail trade, and property taxes levied. After identifying towns that were “urban centers,” analysis focused on determining which of those towns were centers of regional influence. Then, the existing degree of relationship that each town in the state had to the identified urban centers was measured. In order to accomplish that task, CDC staff examined:

- *circulation patterns of daily newspapers* published in Connecticut (which the CDC report noted was “one of the more valuable areas of investigation”);
- the number of days per week of *free parcel delivery service* from urban department stores to each municipality;
- *commuting patterns of manufacturing workers* employed by plants with 100 or more workers, which made-up three-quarters of that type of employment;
- *commuting patterns of high school students* (which the CDC report noted was given limited weight because patterns were shifting as new schools were being built);
- *telephone service*, in particular those areas where free telephone calling was provided to all or part of an urban center;

⁵ CDC report, p. 11.

- general *hospital service areas* that had been established by the State Health Department after studying hospital admissions by place of residence; and
- *existing area definitions*, such as labor market areas defined by the State Labor Department and Standard Metropolitan Areas established by the U.S. Census (both of which the CDC report noted had limited value for its purposes because the boundaries were for a single function and followed town lines).⁶

Figure I-2. CDC Process for Defining Logical Regions



Source of data: CDC, *Progress Toward Regional Planning in Connecticut*, 1959

All of that information was combined to identify similarities and differences among groups of towns. A point scoring system was developed to weigh the relative importance of the measures listed above, and a scoring summary was prepared for each town in the state. As part

⁶ CDC report, Chapter 3.

of the summary, consideration was also given to the geographical relationship of towns, with one score for towns contiguous to an urban center, and an additional score for instances where “substantial, continuous urban development spread from the urban center across the boundary into an adjoining municipality.”⁷

Next, the CDC staff examined other items considered relevant to defining a region. The additional factors included:

- traffic flow patterns;
- topography;
- watersheds and drainage;
- state highway plans;
- population and economic growth trends in urban centers and surrounding areas;
- the influence of out-of-state urban centers (e.g., Springfield, Massachusetts) on towns in Connecticut; and
- the influence of Connecticut urban centers on municipalities in other states.

Weighing all of the information compiled, the commission identified tentative planning regions.⁸ However, it did not make the boundaries public until it was contacted by local groups in a geographic area that were interested in establishing a regional planning authority. At that point, CDC staff set up meetings with municipal officials to discuss the proposed boundaries. After reviewing the feedback, advice, and information from those in the region, the Connecticut Development Commission determined the final definition of the region and announced it publicly.

After the boundaries of the regions were finalized, the towns within the defined area were responsible for the steps required to form a Regional Planning Authority. However, CDC staff was available to assist with informational meetings and other promotional efforts designed to explain the new regional system to the legislative bodies required to vote on membership in the authority.⁹

The first finalized region -- the Capitol Planning Region -- was announced in June of 1958. In May 1959, CDC published a report with information about the status of efforts to establish RPAs, which was as follows:

- one existing authority predating the state study (South Central), which by law was allowed to continue operating;
- one region with a finalized definition (Capitol);

⁷ CDC report, p.25.

⁸ In some cases, the definition included a “core” minimum (consisting of the urban center and towns clearly related to it) as well as “environs” (where future development related to the urban center was anticipated). Towns with equal orientation to two or more urban areas might be included to obtain local opinion about their preferable designation.

⁹ CDC report, p. 37.

- seven regions that had been tentatively defined as of that date (Bridgeport, Central Naugatuck, New Britain/Bristol, Middletown, New London/Groton, Stamford/Norwalk, and Danbury);
- three regions that had requested a definition (Norwich, Ansonia/Derby, and Meriden);
- five regions where no action had been taken but there was evidence of homogeneity (Torrington/Winchester, Windham, Putnam/Killingly, Northern Housatonic Valley, and Lower Middlesex); and
- 13 towns (Andover, Canton, Colchester, Coventry, Enfield, Granby, Hartland, Hebron, Marlborough, Stafford, Somers, Suffield, and Union) that had not been assigned to any region because the studies conducted by CDC failed “to establish a clearly dominant urban center orientation.”¹⁰

By 1972, the 15 planning regions still in use today had been defined. At that time, all but two towns in the state were assigned to a region. A few years ago, one of those towns -- Union -- decided to join a RPO. Currently, the other unassigned town -- Stafford -- is in discussions about joining another RPO. Figure I-3 shows the boundaries of the regions (with the names of the RPOs currently operating in each area).

Redefining regions. In 1959, CDC was authorized to redefine (as well as define) planning regions. The need for amending boundaries was identified by the commission itself, which recommended municipalities whose orientation toward a specific region was not initially strong should be allowed later to join an established authority.¹¹

The statutes (C.G.S. Sec. 8-32a) also allow a town that is contiguous to the area of an existing Regional Planning Organization (but not located within any defined region) to petition the RPO and request inclusion. The RPO then forwards the request with a recommendation to OPM, the successor to CDC and now responsible for planning regions. OPM makes the final decision whether to redefine the region to include the petitioner. If the region is redefined, the area of operation of that agency is extended to include the additional town, and the town may join the RPO.

Towns can also request a change in their designated region under C.G.S. Sec. 16a-4b. In that case, the town petitions OPM for a “redefinition or redesignation as part of a different planning region.” OPM must hold a hearing on the petition and is to consider whether the services the petitioner needs can be better served by a region other than the one where the town is currently assigned.

Until 2007, no town had ever formally requested a move from one region to another. Indeed, until the recent assignment of Union to a specific planning region and the possible assignment of Stafford to another planning region, there have not been any changes in the boundaries of the logical regions since the 1970s.

¹⁰ CDC report, p. 34.

¹¹ CDC report, p. 13. (This role is now assigned to OPM under C.G.S. Sec. 16a-4a.)

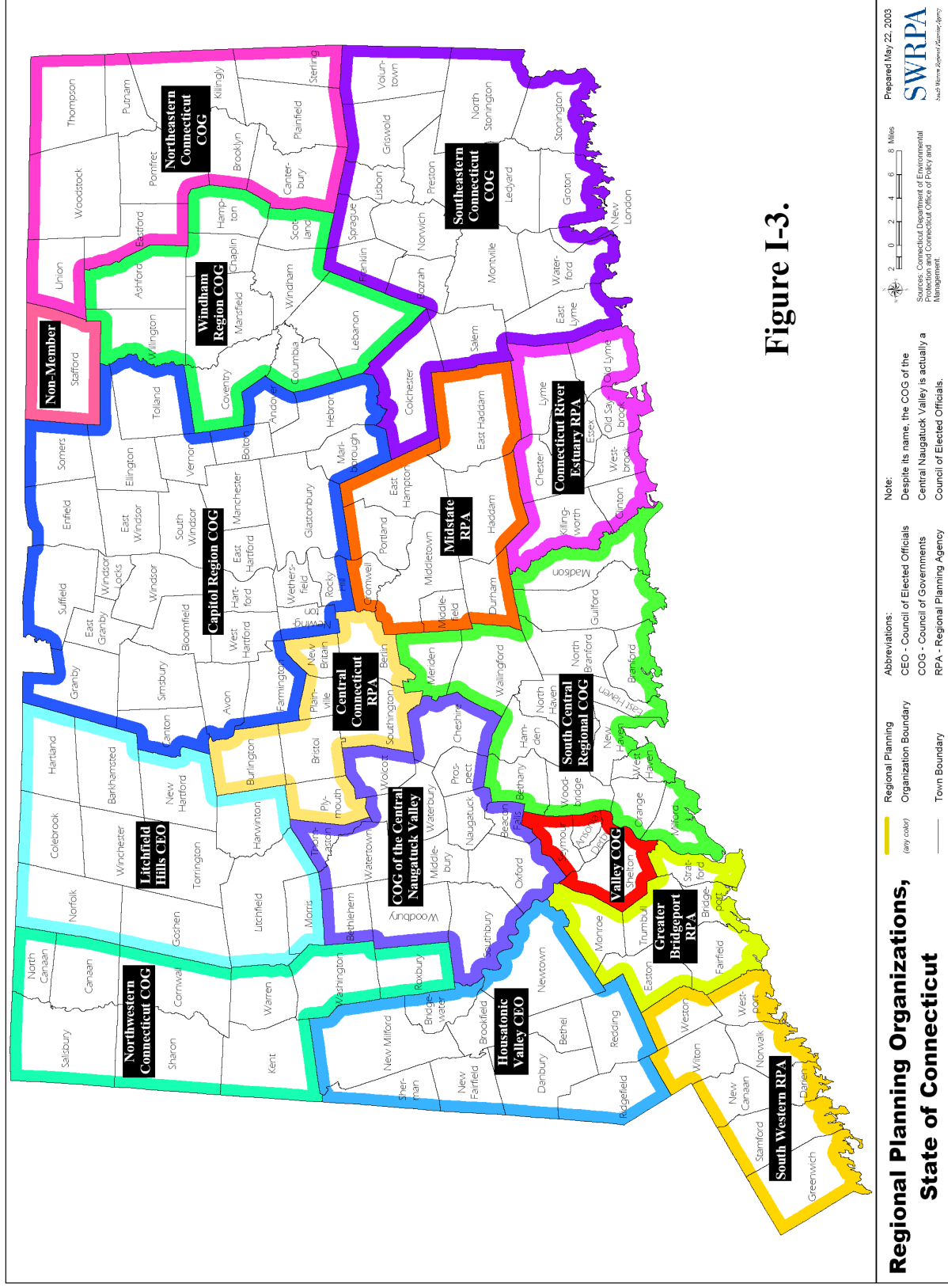


Figure I-3.

Over the years, a few towns expressed interest in moving to a different region, but those that discussed such a move with OPM were encouraged to make an informal change. In 2007, the town of Ashford began attending RPO meetings and interacting with towns in the Northeast region. It subsequently ended its membership in the Windham Region Council of Governments, the RPO whose territory includes Ashford, and became a member of the Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments. Ashford submitted a formal request for a boundary change to OPM, but the request is still pending. In the meantime, the Windham COG will still be responsible for certain activities involving Ashford, such as preparation of a plan of development for a region that encompasses the town.

Process for Establishing a RPA

During the period while CDC was working to define the logical regions, the legislature made several changes to the statutory requirements for regional planning authorities. The first, adopted in 1957, affected the process of establishing RPAs. Beginning that year, in order to create a Regional Planning Authority, the number of towns within a defined region that adopted ordinances to join the RPA had to represent at least 60 percent of the total possible representation on the board.¹² (If membership subsequently fell below 40 percent of the total possible representation, the RPA would cease to exist.)

In 1959, Public Act 613:

- eliminated the requirement that a member town had to have a local planning or zoning commission in order to join an RPA;
- mandated preparation of an annual RPA report;
- added notification requirements to the Regional Plan of Development process; and
- specified that a majority of the representatives to the RPA had to approve the regional plan.

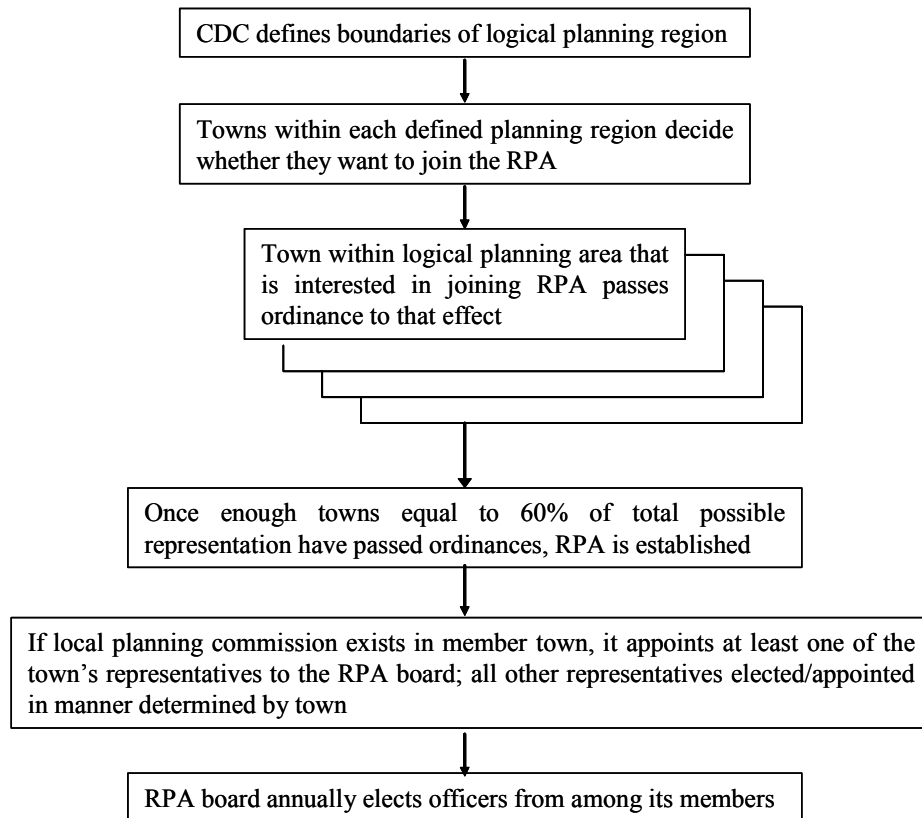
Finally, that same year the name Regional Planning Authority was changed to Regional Planning Agency.

Figure I-4 summarizes the steps now required to establish a RPA. In general, any municipality within a defined planning region can choose to join the RPA in its area. To do so, the local legislative body must adopt an ordinance authorizing membership. Once a town becomes a member, six months notice must be given before it can withdraw.

Since 1957, the jurisdiction of a RPA has been the same as the state-defined planning region for its area. (Prior to that, jurisdiction was coterminous with the boundaries of the member towns.)

¹² This meant the total number of board seats each town was entitled to had to be determined, using the statutory formula for additional seats based on population. Then, the total number of possible seats if all towns joined the RPO had to be determined. Finally, the number of representatives that would constitute at least 60 percent of that total had to be calculated.

Figure I-4. Process For Establishing a Regional Planning Agency



Source: LPR&IC

Other Types of Regional Planning Organizations

In 1965 and 1971, the state legislature enacted legislation giving local elected officials from towns located within the same planning regions authority to form two other types of regional entities -- a Regional Council of Elected Officials or a Regional Council of Governments. As described in more detail below, the former could be as small as two towns, while the latter had to include members from at least 60 percent of the towns eligible to join.

Regional Councils of Elected Officials. In 1965, Public Act 511 authorized the establishment of a Regional Planning Organization that required the direct involvement of the elected chief executive of each member town. Under that law, two or more towns within any state-defined planning region can decide to establish a Regional Council of Elected Officials. In order to join the council, the legislative body of each participating town must adopt an ordinance to that effect. (If a town later wishes to withdraw, it adopts an ordinance to that effect.)

Member towns have equal representation on the board, with a single seat per town filled by the chief elected official of the town (or, if none, by a member of the town legislative body

chosen by that body). Alternates can attend meetings, if bylaws to that effect have been adopted. The officers of the council are selected annually from among the representatives on the council.

Initially, Regional Councils of Elected Officials were authorized to:

- consider matters of a public nature common to two or more member towns that were deemed appropriate, including health, safety, welfare, education, and economic issues;
- promote cooperative arrangements;
- coordinate actions among member towns; and
- make recommendations regarding those activities.

In 1971, any RCEO operating in a defined planning region without a Regional Planning Agency was authorized to exercise all the powers of the RPA. In addition, RCEOs became eligible for technical and financial assistance from the state, including funding in support of regional planning activities. (Previously, only RPAs were eligible for the latter grants.)

Regional Councils of Governments. Also in 1971, the legislature authorized the third type of Regional Planning Organization -- the Regional Council of Governments. This structure can be established within any state-defined planning region, provided at least 60 percent of the towns eligible to join adopt ordinances to do so. In cases where an RCEO or RPA already exists within the region, that entity ceases to exist once the RCOG is established.

Regional Councils of Governments exercise all the rights and authority, with the same responsibilities, of RPAs and RCEOs. Initially, however, each RCOG also had to have a Regional Planning Commission (RPC) to carry out the planning duties and responsibilities for the state-defined planning region, including the Regional Plan of Development and the review of certain zoning and subdivision matters. In 2000, the use of Regional Planning Commissions became optional, and RCOGs can now carry out all planning duties and responsibilities directly.

Like the towns that belong to a Regional Council of Elected Officials, the members of a RCOG have equal representation on the board. One seat per town is filled by the chief elected official of the town (or, if none, by an elected official appointed in a manner determined by the town's legislative body). The one exception to the single seat provision is Hartford, which has three additional seats on the RCOG board in its region (per Special Act 73-79). Alternates can attend and vote at RCEO meetings, if bylaws to that effect have been adopted. The officers of the council are elected annually from among the representatives on the council.

Membership on the now optional Regional Planning Commission, which is considered a subdivision of the RCOG, is also one per town (four for Hartford). Each member town's representative to the Regional Planning Commission is appointed by the town's planning commission. The person has to be an elector of the town and a member of the local planning commission.

Any member town wishing to withdraw from the RCOG can do so by adopting an ordinance to that effect. However, the town must pay its pro rata share for any operating expenses or program activities already authorized by the council on the date of withdrawal.

Finally, if the total membership on the council falls below 40 percent of all eligible towns within the state-defined planning region, the RCOG is deemed a Regional Council of Elected Officials.

Chapter Two

Role of the Office of Policy and Management

The Office of Policy and Management is the primary state agency that guides the activities of Regional Planning Organizations in Connecticut (with the exception of transportation-related planning duties). The responsibilities of OPM, as they relate to RPOs, are primarily as reviewer, liaison, and facilitator and include:

- designating and re-designating regional planning areas, as described in Chapter One;
- reviewing regional development plans and municipal conservation and development plans, and examining regional plans for consistency with the State Plan of Conservation and Development, which is described in detail in Chapter Five;
- providing information on state initiatives and facilitating regional initiatives undertaken by RPOs, including hosting bi-monthly meetings;
- serving as a repository for certain budgetary and other information regarding RPOs;
- operating the new Office of Responsible Growth created by Executive Order No. 15;
- chairing a 19-member Responsible Growth Task Force; and
- administering a regional performance incentive grant program.

Since 2005, state government leaders have put forth several key policy initiatives that move the state towards implementing several of the Smart Growth concepts noted in the introduction. The lead agency for implementation of these initiatives is the Office of Policy and Management. Many of the mandates that are described in this chapter are still in the planning stages and have not yet been implemented. The legislature has recently adopted policies that require updated conservation and development plans at the local level in order to receive state funding for certain local projects. The intent of this, coupled with other financial incentives, is to encourage responsible growth patterns in the future.

This chapter describes OPM's organizational structure and the staffing available to carry out its responsibilities related to encouraging greater regional cooperation among municipalities and regional planning through the multi-level conservation and development planning process. It also discusses the responsibilities of the Office of Responsible Growth and how this office, coupled with legislation adopted during the 2007 session, is leading conservation and development efforts, as well as providing financial incentives to encourage regional service-sharing.

OPM Organizational Structure and Staffing Trends

Figure II-1 shows the organizational structure of the Intergovernmental Policy Division within OPM. Currently there are ten positions within the Intergovernmental Affairs Unit – seven filled and three vacant – in addition to the division director and the undersecretary.

This unit is responsible for developing the State Plan of Conservation and Development, reviewing Regional Plans of Development and local plans of conservation and development, acting as liaison to RPOs, staffing the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, and administering the Local Capital Improvement Program. The newly created Office of Responsible Growth, established by Governor M. Jodi Rell under Executive Order No. 15 in October 2006, is also located within the Intergovernmental Affairs Unit. The office currently has four staff and OPM intends to fill the three vacant positions and assign the new staff to the office.

Office of Responsible Growth

The language contained in Executive Order No. 15 embraces the “smart growth” concepts described in the Introduction of this report, and states:

...We must actively steer the continued growth and development of our state to prevent sprawling development patterns from forever changing the character of our communities. If left unchecked, this trend will continue to fragment the landscape, impair our ability to remain economically competitive, consume precious natural resources, waste energy, pollute the air and water, increase Greenhouse Gases, that can accelerate the pace of climate change, and overwhelm local and state infrastructure....

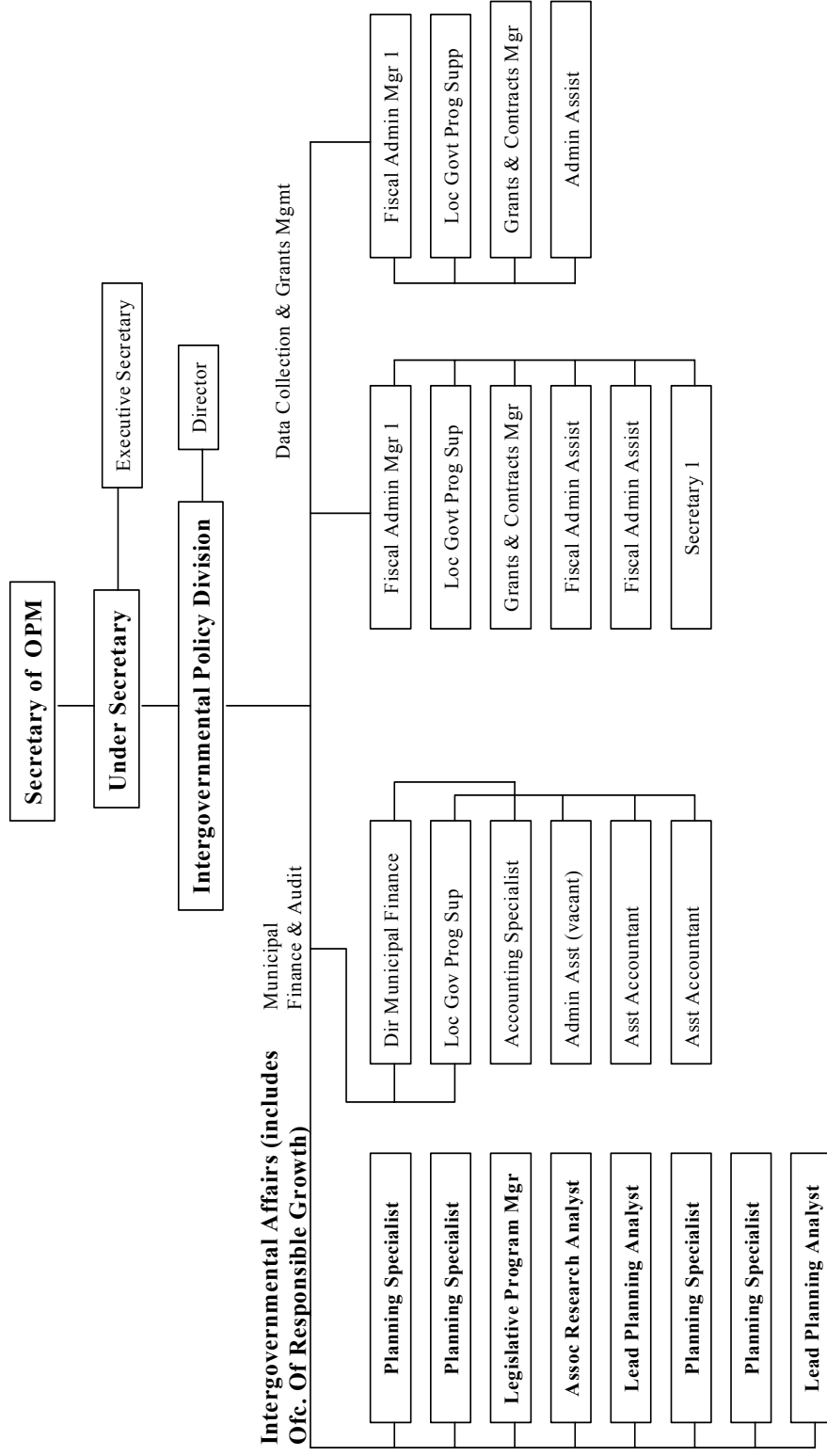
The executive order also notes that any state efforts to steer growth must include municipal officials and be respectful of “home rule” and “local autonomy.”

Responsibilities. Many of the mandates contained in the executive order are aimed at integrating comprehensive planning across state agencies and among the local, regional, and state levels. Responsibilities assigned to the new office are wide-ranging. The responsibilities and the implementation status are shown in Table II-1.

An Act Concerning Responsible Growth

The legislature also adopted legislation that promotes responsible growth concepts at the state, regional, and local levels of government. During the 2007 legislative session, the Connecticut General Assembly adopted P.A. 07-239, An Act Concerning Responsible Growth. This act gives OPM several additional responsibilities related to growth-related planning and incentives to promote regional service sharing, and it significantly adds to the provisions established under the governor’s executive order.

Figure II-1. The Office of Policy and Management: Intergovernmental Policy Division



Source: OPM

Table II-1. Responsibilities of Office of Responsible Growth and Implementation Status	
<i>Provision</i>	<i>Status</i>
Chair an Interagency Steering Council (consisting of the commissioners of the Departments of Economic and Community Development, Environmental Protection, Agriculture, Transportation, and Public Health as well as the executive directors of the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority and the Connecticut Development Authority) that is charged with coordinating policy development and capital planning.	The first meeting was convened on March 26, 2007, and it was decided to form two workgroups to provide input to the council: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Policy Workgroup, comprised of deputy commissioners of each agency, will develop responsible growth policies, standards, and criteria. This group has met twice since March. 2. A Project Review Workgroup, comprised of planners from each agency, will develop a system to evaluate projects and “vet” projects as a body in order to move desirable responsible growth projects along. This group has met six times since March.
Create Regional Roundtables to facilitate participation of local officials and foster the development of planning agendas.	OPM staff completed visits with all 15 RPOs and plan to schedule Regional Roundtables by spring 2008.
Develop support and incentives for towns to plan regionally, update zoning maps and ordinances, and build the capacity of municipal staff, boards, and agencies to make complex land use decisions by establishing a new municipal training program.	A Land Use Training Advisory Council has been established comprised of groups that currently provide training to local land use officials and staff. The advisory council will formalize the curricula and ensure programs are consistent. Funding for FY 07 was \$100,000; it increased to \$150,000 for FY 08.
Update the “Green Plan” for Connecticut by June 2007.	DEP has completed its re-draft of the “Green Plan,” and it is available on the DEP website.
Review transportation policies/projects to increase opportunities to promote mass transit and roadway design that support state/local economic development, while preserving and enhancing “walkability” of our communities.	A deputy commissioner at ConnDOT has been appointed to supervise Connecticut’s mass transportation efforts with a new emphasis on transit oriented development.
Expand housing opportunities to meet the needs of all Connecticut residents and support an expanding workforce with housing that provides ready access to passenger rail and bus service.	P.A. 07-4 (JSS) included a provision allowing local planning and zoning commissions to establish incentive housing zones with several grant programs to assist municipalities and housing authorities.
Review all state funding that impacts growth and development in Connecticut and establish criteria to target funds for uses consistent with responsible growth concepts.	Towns without local plans of conservation and development prepared within the last 10 years will be ineligible for state discretionary funding beginning 2010.
Develop responsible growth criteria to help guide the state’s future investment decisions.	Responsible Growth Task Force established in P.A. 07-239 to address this issue
Create a “Green and Growing” webpage to highlight best practices.	The Office of Responsible Growth launched the new website in November 2007.
Designate a State Responsible Growth Coordinator.	The Undersecretary of Intergovernmental Policy was appointed the coordinator by the OPM Secretary on October 20, 2006.
Sources of data: Executive Order No. 15 and OPM.	

Task force. The act establishes a 19-member Responsible Growth Task Force charged with identifying responsible growth criteria to help guide the state's future investment decisions and study land use laws, policies, and programs. The task force includes all members of the Interagency Steering Council noted in Table II-1. The task force is supposed to report back to the governor no later than February 15, 2008.

Updated municipal conservation and development plans. By law, municipalities must amend their plans of conservation and development at least once every 10 years. If a town does not, the municipality's chief elected official must send a letter to the secretary of OPM and the transportation, economic and community development, and environmental protection commissioners explaining why the plan was not updated.

Under current law, a copy of this letter must be included with any application submitted to these state officials for funding related to the conservation or development of real property within that town. P.A. 07-239 expands this provision to require that a copy of this letter be included in each municipal application for discretionary funding submitted to any state agency. It also makes the municipality ineligible for such funding unless the OPM secretary expressly waives the requirement for an updated plan. This provision of the act is effective beginning July 1, 2010.

Economic strategic plan. The act also requires the commissioner of economic and community development, within available appropriations, to prepare an Economic Strategic Plan for the state in consultation with a number of other state and quasi-state agencies and ensure the plan is consistent with the State Plan of Conservation and Development. The first economic strategy plan is due on or before July 1, 2009.

Studies. The act directs the secretary of OPM to undertake two studies, within available appropriations, and submit them with recommendations to the planning and development and the finance, revenue, and bonding committees by July 1, 2009. The first study involves a review of regional tax-based revenue sharing programs, and the other is to examine regional asset districts. Both studies are supposed to include a review of any available models of such programs, adaptations that may be needed to implement such programs in Connecticut, and other possible effects on both municipal and regional finances. The study of regional tax-based revenue sharing programs must also include an analysis of the effect such programs would have on property taxes and on towns' grand lists.

Regional performance incentive grant. Finally, the act establishes a Regional Performance Incentive Program administered by OPM -- \$8.6 million was allocated for FY 08. It allows any RPO to submit a proposal for joint provision of a service or services that are currently provided by municipalities within the region of the RPO (or contiguous to the region), but not currently provided on a regional basis. The proposal must include a service or services that may increase the municipalities' purchasing power or provide a cost savings initiative resulting in a decrease in participating municipalities' expenses and in lower property taxes. A copy of any proposal must be sent to state legislators representing the participating municipalities.

The act is very specific in terms of the information that must be included in the proposal submission. The proposal must:

- describe at least one service currently provided by a municipality or municipalities within the Regional Planning Organization (or contiguous to the RPO) but not currently provided on a regional basis;
- provide a description of how such service would be delivered on a regional basis, including consideration of what entity would be responsible for such service, and how the population would continue to be served;
- describe the amount and the manner in which the service will achieve economies of scale and the amount and manner in which each municipality will reduce its mill rate as a result of the savings realized by changing the municipal service to a regional service;
- include a cost-benefit analysis for the provision of such service by the municipality and by the RPO;
- set out a plan of implementation for such regional service; and
- estimate the savings that will be realized by each municipality.

As part of the application process, each participating municipality must certify that there are no legal obstacles to providing services in the manner proposed, including but not limited to binding arbitration agreements. Municipalities were required to submit proposals to OPM by December 3, 2007, and to provide the Resolution of Endorsement from the legislative body of each municipality affected by the proposal by December 31, 2007.

The secretary of OPM is charged with reviewing all proposals and awarding grants to those determined to best meet the requirements. OPM anticipates the awards will be announced in January 2008. Furthermore, the act requires the secretary to give priority to proposals presented by Regional Councils of Governments that have at least half of their member towns participating in the proposal. The OPM secretary must report to the governor and the Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding by February 1, 2008, on how the grants were allocated.

Chapter Three

Regional Planning Organizations

In Connecticut, Regional Planning Organizations are creations of the state in the sense that state statutes specify the manner in which such entities shall be formed, but there is no requirement that such entities be formed. Likewise, many of the permissible activities of RPOs are described broadly, providing for flexible implementation of those tasks by the towns that voluntarily choose to come together and establish a RPO. This approach to the operation of RPOs allows the individual character of each region to be reflected in the particular structure, budget, and staff that member towns collectively decide upon.

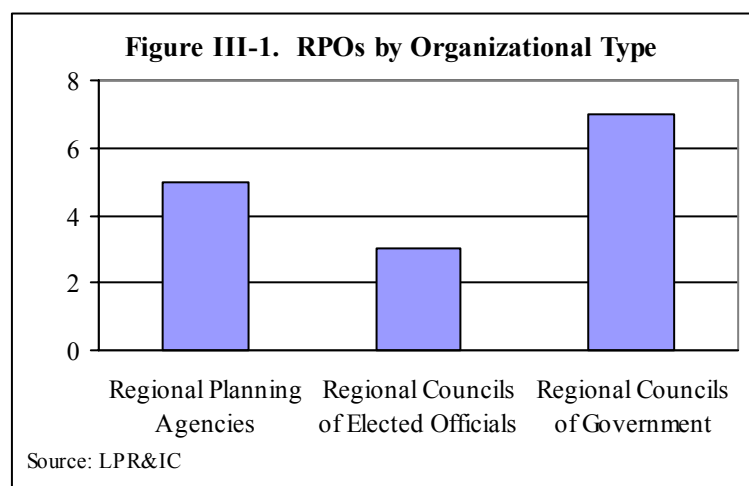
In Connecticut today, there are 15 Regional Planning Organizations, encompassing all but one of the 169 towns in the state. (See Figure I-3 in Chapter One for a map showing the geographic boundaries of the regions.)

State law allows three different types of operating entity -- Regional Planning Agency, Regional Council of Elected Officials, and Regional Council of Governments. Each type is used in multiple planning regions within the state. Figure III-1 summarizes the current number of RPOs by organizational type.

Representation Issue

There are several reasons for the availability and use of different types of regional planning structures in Connecticut. When the state wanted to offer a new structure that brought chief elected officials to the table, there was a reluctance to arbitrarily impose another structure in place of the original structure of Regional Planning Agencies that was already established in multiple regions and which municipalities had willingly joined.

The desire to add a type of structure involving chief elected officials arose from differing beliefs about the importance of having political leaders and professional planners directly involved in the activities that Regional Planning Organizations were being authorized to perform. The philosophy in some municipalities is that, given the opportunity, the chief elected official should be directly involved in the decision-making process of any external entity that has jurisdiction over matters that might affect what and how the town can operate in the future. Other municipalities, however, believe a town's long-term planning interests are best represented by individuals with experience in planning, zoning, or land use.



The other issue that participants in the process view differently is the question of equal versus proportionate representation for member towns in situations where regional issues are being decided. Many towns are comfortable with a single voice (and vote) per town because they find the perspectives of the other towns in their geographic region compatible on issues such as Smart Growth and transportation. Also, they may fear proportionate representation will result in one or two large towns controlling enough votes to unduly influence the outcome of at least some regional decisions.¹³ Thus, these towns opt for equal representation within the regional organization they join.

Other municipalities are concerned a few small towns will be able to block actions that a majority of the people living in a particular region support, if each town has the same number of votes. Those towns prefer a structure with proportionate representation.

Of the three available organizational structures, both the Regional Councils of Elected Officials and the Regional Councils of Governments are required to have the chief elected official of each member town serve on the board, although provisions can be made for alternates to attend meetings. In addition, regardless of size, member towns only get one representative (and therefore one vote) each.¹⁴ The primary difference between these two structures is in their creation and dissolution provisions.

Regional Planning Agencies, on the other hand, offer proportionate representation to members. Each member town gets at least two seats on the board of the RPA, plus additional representatives if the town population exceeds 25,000 people. Furthermore, while chief elected officials serve on the boards of some RPAs, at least one of the town's representatives must be appointed by the local planning commission, if such an entity exists. Consequently, at least some board members have backgrounds and direct experience dealing with planning and related land use issues. Table III-1 provides a comparison of the statutory requirements related to the organizational structure of each type of RPO.

Related to these discussions is the issue of the appropriate overall size for a regional board. During interviews with program review staff, representatives of many of the existing RPOs talked about the importance their members place on having a board that is small enough for the members to be able to have a "conversation" about issues. They expressed concerns that too large a membership necessitates the use of subcommittees, thereby negating the personal contact among town leaders that can be so beneficial to achieving cooperative efforts.

Changes over time. As previously noted, the three types of RPOs were authorized by state statute at different times between 1947 and 1971. As a result, when new options became available, some groups of municipalities decided to change the type of Regional Planning Organization they belonged to, while others decided to finally form a regional planning group.

¹³ The question of "one person, one vote" has been raised in the past with respect to the single representative per town allowed on the RCEO and RCOG boards. The U.S. Court of Appeals ruled in 1974 (in *Education/Instruccion, Inc. v. Moore*, 503 F.2d 1187) that this provision was not a violation based on the fact that RCOGs do not exercise governmental powers or perform governmental functions. The directors of many of the RCEOs and RCOGs indicated that members of their boards of directors generally are in full agreement on most actions taken by the RPO so the absence of proportionate representation has not been an issue.

¹⁴ The sole exception to this rule is Hartford, which has three additional seats on the board.

Table III-1. Structural Requirements of Regional Planning Organizations			
	<i>Regional Planning Agency</i>	<i>Regional Council of Elected Officials</i>	<i>Regional Council of Governments</i>
Initial statutory authorization	1947, but 1955 within a state-defined region	1965	1971
Representation	2 per member town + 1 per 50,000 people (or fraction thereof greater than 25,000)	1 per member town	1 per member town (except Hartford gets 4 seats)
Minimum participation	2 or more towns within planning region that represent 60%+ of total possible representation	2 or more towns in single planning region or multiple contiguous planning regions	60% or more of all towns in any planning region
Selection of representatives	if planning commission exists, it appoints at least one representative; other representative(s) elected/appointed as town chooses	elected chief executive of each member town; if none, member of town legislative body chosen by that body	chief elected official of each member town; if none, elected official appointed by town's legislative body per local ordinance
Alternates	not mentioned	bylaw can provide for alternate representative to attend meetings	bylaw can provide for alternate representative to attend and vote at meetings
Source of data: Connecticut General Statutes			

The shift from one type of RPO to another has predominately been a change from a Regional Planning Agency to a Regional Council of Governments. Indeed, all but one of the 15 RPOs operated as a Regional Planning Agency at one time.

The paths of organizational change were diverse. Some regions that began as informal regional entities have changed structures multiple times, and one region has operated at different times under each of the three statutorily recognized types of RPO. At the same time, five regional organizations established in the 1960s -- four of which are RPAs -- have never changed structures.

Twelve of the RPOs were first established during the 1960s. Two RPOs (South Central and Capitol) pre-date that period, while the final RPO to be formed (Northwestern) began operating in 1972.

The current distribution of RPO types is about five years old, with the last change occurring in 2002 when the Valley Regional Planning Agency became the Valley Regional Council of Governments. Table III-2 summarizes the history of the organizational structures of the 15 planning regions in the state from 1947 to the present.

Table III-2. Changes in Organizational Type by Individual RPO				
<i>Region</i>	<i>Original Type</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Changes in Structure</i>	<i>Current Type</i>
South Central	RPA	1948	started with a few towns; by 1960 - serving all towns in region; 1982 - became RCOG	RCOG
Capitol	RPA	1958	1966 - RCEO organized; 1973 - RPA and RCEO merged to form RCOG	RCOG
Greater Bridgeport	RPA	1960	no changes	RPA
Central Naugatuck Valley	RPA	1960	1970-1983 - RCEO and RPA operate jointly; 1984 - RCEO becomes the RPO, but uses Council of Governments in its name and has Regional Planning Commission	RCEO
Southeastern	RPA	1961	1992 - became RCOG	RCOG
South Western	RPA	1962	no changes	RPA
Midstate*	RPA	1962	no changes	RPA
Central Connecticut	RPA	1966	originally called New Britain - Bristol RPA; by 1973 - serving all towns in region	RPA
Valley	RPA	1966	1970 - Council of Governments created, but it did not officially replace RPA until 2002	RCOG
Windham	RPA	1966	2000 - became RCOG	RCOG
Northeastern	RPA	1967	1958 - Quinebaug Valley Action Committee preceded RPA; 1987 - became RCOG; c.2001 - previously unaffiliated Union joined	RCOG
Litchfield Hills	RPA	1967	1980 - RPA ceased operating; 1987 - current entity established	RCEO
Connecticut River Estuary*	RPA	1967	no changes	RPA
Housatonic Valley	CEO	1968	no changes	RCEO
Northwestern	RPA	1972	1985 - became RCOG	RCOG
<p>* Connecticut River Estuary RPA and Midstate RPA are connected through a joint Regional Council of Elected Officials that includes all of the towns in the two RPAs. In this case, the RCEO is primarily an information sharing opportunity rather than a decision-making mechanism. Therefore, the two RPAs are dealt with as separate organizations for all purposes in this report.</p> <p>Sources of data: Individual RPO web sites and interviews with RPO staff; OPM, <i>Profiles of Regional Planning Organizations in Connecticut</i> (1989)</p>				

Demographics

Individually, the make-up of the RPOs differs considerably, even within the same type of organizational structure. For example, in terms of the dimensions of the geographic region of each, the RPOs range in size from four towns to 29 towns; cover between 58 and 762 square miles; and have populations of 23,000 to 739,000 people. Table III-3 lists the 15 RPOs by name and provides information about the demographic characteristics of each.

Table III-3. Demographic Characteristics of Connecticut RPOs							
<i>Name of Regional Planning Organization</i>	<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Type of RPO</i>	<i>Location of Office</i>	<i>No. of Towns</i>	<i>No. of Bd. Members</i>	<i>Region (sq.mi.)</i>	<i>Popula. (2004 est.)</i>
Capitol Region Council of Governments	CRCOG	RCOG	Hartford	29	32	762	739,399
Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency	CCRPA	RPA	Bristol	7	17	164	232,460
Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Agency	CRERPA	RPA	Old Saybrook	9	18	205	62,184
Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley	COGCNV	RCEO	Waterbury	13	13	316	281,401
Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency	GBRPA	RPA	Bridgeport	6	18	146	310,739
Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials	HVCEO	RCEO	Brookfield	10	10	335	221,481
Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials	LHCEO	RCEO	Goshen	11	11	417	82,011
Midstate Regional Planning Agency	MRPA	RPA	Middletown	8	17	247	109,761
Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments	NECCOG	RCOG	Killingly	11*	12*	420	81,520
Northwestern Connecticut Council of Governments	NWCCOG	RCOG	Warren	9	9	359	23,374
South Central Regional Council of Governments	SCRCOG	RCOG	North Haven	15	15	387	560,105
Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments	SCCOG	RCOG	Norwich	18	20** + 4 nonvoting	559	249,592
South Western Regional Planning Agency	SWRPA	RPA	Stamford	8	22	225	362,193
Valley Council of Governments	VCOG	RCOG	Derby	4	4	58	86,888
Windham Region Council of Governments	WINCOG	RCOG	Willimantic	10*	9*	327	88,681
<p>* The town of Ashford (4,349 people within 40 square miles) is part of the state-defined territory assigned to the Windham region. However, it is no longer participating as a member of the WINCOG board. Instead, it has joined the NECCOG board. Ashford has petitioned OPM to move to the Northeastern region, but the request is still pending. Therefore, for the present time, Ashford remains part of the WINCOG geographic area for regional planning purposes.</p> <p>The town of Stafford (11,815 people within 59 square miles) has never been part of a planning region. It is considering joining WINCOG, which would give that region an additional town and an additional member on its board of directors.</p> <p>** Includes both the Town of Groton and the City of Groton as well as the Town of Stonington and the Borough of Stonington. The four non-voting members represent the Mashantucket Pequot tribe, the Mohegan tribe, Submarine Group Two/Naval Region Northeast, and the Coast Guard Academy.</p> <p>Sources of data: Connecticut Register and Manual and interviews with individual RPO directors and OPM staff.</p>							

Duties and Functions

Although the depth of activity may differ, the focus of many of the functions performed by RPOs in Connecticut is the same, regardless of their organizational type. One source that provides evidence of this is the individual mission statements of the 15 RPOs. While some are more detailed than others, common themes include increasing cooperation among member towns and providing a forum for the discussion of issues affecting quality of life. (See Appendix A for a table listing the individual statements.)

Planning-related tasks are a primary statutory function of all three types of RPOs. As the first of the three types of organizations to be established, Regional Planning Agencies have the most detailed enabling legislation regarding their powers and duties. However, when the laws establishing RCEOs and RCOGs respectively were adopted, each was given the same functions as RPAs, but rather than listing the items again, the statutes authorize both to exercise all the powers and duties of a RPA. Table III-4 summarizes the statutory roles and responsibilities included in the RPA enabling legislation (and thus by reference in the RCEO and RCOG enabling legislation).

Table III- 4. Statutory Roles of Regional Planning Agencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ At least every 10 years, make plan of development (re: land use, housing, highways, parks, schools, etc.) for area➤ Assist towns in region and state agencies, and may assist other public/private agencies, in developing and carrying out regional plans➤ Provide administrative, management, technical, or planning assistance to towns in region and other public agencies under terms it may determine➤ May make recommendations to towns in region for such metropolitan, regional, or inter-municipal arrangements for most efficient and economical development or operation of public facilities or services deemed desirable for economic and social welfare of region and towns therein➤ Upon request from a town considering feasibility of developing/operating physical facility and services, may render assistance by making studies and recommendations➤ With one or more other RPAs, may establish interagency committee to recommend policies on matters of interregional nature
Note: All references to “towns” also include cities and boroughs Source of data: C.G.S. Sections 8-35a through 8-35e (Chapter 127)

When Regional Councils of Elected Officials were authorized in 1965, three additional functions were included with the reference to exercising all the powers of a RPA (if no such entity existed in the region). Specifically, under C.G.S. Sec. 4-124d, RCEOs are authorized to:

- consider such matters of a public nature common to two or more member towns as it deems appropriate (including health, safety, welfare, education, and economic conditions of the area comprised by its members);

- promote cooperative arrangements and coordinate action among member towns; and
- make recommendations therefore to member towns and other public agencies within the region.

Under C.G.S. Sec. 4-124f, a Regional Council of Elected Officials is also authorized to enter into a contract with any of the three types of Regional Planning Organizations in order to carry out its purposes. In 1971, when the statutory language establishing Regional Councils of Governments was adopted, the section concerning their rights and duties was very brief. Basically, RCOGs were authorized to “exercise all the rights and authority” and “be subject to all of the responsibilities and duties” of RCEOs and RPAs.

The permissiveness of the statutory language governing RPOs in Connecticut allows each organization to perform a broad range of activities at the direction of its member towns. In fact, a key role that RPOs perform is consensus-building among the members around the various issues with which the organization deals.

Another important function RPO staff perform, which is not captured in the statutory language, is as a conduit of information. Based on interviews with RPO directors, the RPO staff provide their member towns with details about new state initiatives, recently adopted legislation or regulations, new grant programs that may be available for one or more towns in their region (or the region as a whole), as well as changes to existing federal and state laws that will impact the region or member towns.

Land use tasks. With respect to Responsible Growth efforts in the state, the key statutory responsibilities of the RPOs include several review and comment duties regarding certain municipal actions -- zone use changes within specified areas, certain subdivision changes, and the content of the local and state plans of conservation and development -- and the preparation of a Regional Plan of Development.

As will be described in more detail in Chapter Five, prior to the adoption of a Municipal Conservation and Development Plan, the town must provide the RPO in its area with a copy of the plan for review and comment. Then the RPO must provide the municipality with an advisory report containing findings on whether the municipal plan is consistent with the existing:

- Regional Plan of Development;
- State Plan of Conservation and Development; and
- plans of conservation and development of the other municipalities within the geographic area covered by the RPO.

During the process of developing the regional plan, which is required at least every 10 years, the RPO will take into consideration issues identified in the local plans of conservation and development prepared by the towns within its defined planning region. However, the extent

to which those plans are directly incorporated into the regional plan and the specific format of the regional plan varies from region to region.¹⁵

Several statutes concerning local entities with land use responsibilities also contain mandates involving Regional Planning Organizations. Two key provisions require written notification to the RPO in the state-defined region where a town is located whenever:

- a municipal zoning commission is considering a proposal to establish or change a zone or a regulation affecting the use of a zone within 500 feet of the boundary of another municipality within the RPO area (C.G.S. Sec. 8-3b); and
- a municipal planning commission is considering a plan for a subdivision of land and the area abuts or includes land in two or more municipalities (C.G.S. Sec. 8-26b).

In the first case, the RPO then has the opportunity to study the proposal and report its findings and recommendations to the municipal zoning commission. Reports by the RPO can address potential negative inter-municipal and environmental impacts created by the proposal. Inter-municipal concerns may include issues such as traffic, density, environmental impact and the burden placed on the adjacent community. Regional concerns may include those objectives and goals supported in the Regional Plan of Development. The report is advisory. However, if one is submitted, it must be made part of the public hearing record.

In the second case, the RPO can submit its findings on the inter-municipal aspects of the proposed subdivision including street layout, storm drainage, and sewer and water service. In both instances, failure to submit a report at or before the town's public hearing on the matter results in a presumption that the RPO does not disapprove of the proposal.

State statute also requires that RPOs be notified, and in some cases comment on, various other projects occurring within a region. These include certain economic development programs, hazardous waste facilities and burial of radioactive waste, solid waste management plans, water supply and water flow issues, and public utility projects. Appendix B shows the notification and comment requirements.

Transportation issues. For most RPOs, a broad array of transportation issues consume a large portion of staff and board member time. Indeed, in some regions, based on the proportion of transportation-related funds available, this is the primary function of agency staff. Some RPOs focus on public transportation modes such as buses and trains; other regions concentrate on highway congestion and improvement projects. In still other regions, the major concern is road repairs. In FY 07, the RPOs combined received \$6.2 million in federal transportation funds for planning.

¹⁵ In some regions, the time periods covered by individual municipal plans are very different because some towns have been slow to update their conservation and development plans. In those cases, the RPO is less likely to make extensive use of the municipal plans in preparing the Regional Plan of Development. However, new legislation requiring municipal plans to be updated at least every 10 years in order to receive state discretionary funding should result in the availability of more up-to-date local plans in the future.

For federally mandated transportation planning purposes, 11 of the RPOs have been designated as Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).¹⁶ This means:

- they are located in urbanized areas that meet federal population criteria based on population and density measures;
- ConnDOT and transit operators work cooperatively with them on devising and guiding projects; and
- they have veto authority over projects proposed by ConnDOT for inclusion in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), which is a list of projects the state expects to fund during a five-year period with federal money as well as regionally significant projects that could affect air quality.

Eight of those 11 RPOs are further grouped into three Transportation Management Areas (TMAs). The TMAs:

- contain more than 200,000 people;
- select projects in conjunction with ConnDOT and transit operators;
- take the lead on Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) projects; and
- have veto authority over projects proposed for inclusion in the STIP.

RPOs functioning as MPOs and TMAs receive money directly from the Federal Highway Administration to perform the duties listed above. The exact amount is based on a formula that takes into consideration factors such as the nature of the projects being considered and activity measures (i.e., vehicle miles traveled, congested vehicle miles traveled, and lane miles), but provides a minimum allocation.

As part of their role as MPOs, the RPOs also have to develop a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which is a list of federally funded transportation projects that maintain and enhance the roadway network in the particular region. Another task required of the RPOs is preparation of a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) that provides a 25-year overview of proposed major transportation investments in the region. The RTP must be updated every three years.

The other four RPOs in Connecticut -- Litchfield Hills, Northeastern, Northwestern, and Windham -- have been designated as Rural Regional Planning Organizations (RRPOs). (None of these regions meets the 50,000 population and density measure required by the federal government for designation as an urbanized area.) ConnDOT works with the RRPOs to devise and guide projects in cooperation with the local officials in those regions, and it distributes federal transportation funding to them.

Another transportation-related effort that involves RPOs is the Transportation Investment Areas (TIAs). These areas, which encompass the five major transportation corridors in the state, were created to assist the Connecticut Transportation Strategy Board (TSB) with development of

¹⁶ The material about MPOs and TMAs is summarized from: OPM and ConnDOT, *Transportation in Connecticut: The Planning Process* (October 2005), pp. 4, 13-17.

a statewide strategic plan. The role of the RPOs is to be one of the resources providing local and regional input into the planning process.

Homeland security. The newest issue area that RPOs are being asked to get more involved with is homeland security and emergency management. Implementation efforts in this area are based on a regional approach that uses only five geographic regions. This means some or all of several different RPOs are grouped together for purposes of funding homeland security and emergency preparedness initiatives.

The issue related to homeland security of most immediate concern to the RPOs in 2007 was the new system for distributing Connecticut's share of federal homeland security money to the municipalities through the RPOs. The Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) asked the RPOs located within each of the five DEMHS regions to designate a lead RPO by October 2007. In three areas, a RPO has been selected as the coordinating entity for that area. In two regions, DEMHS staff will handle the coordinating function.

Cooperative purchasing efforts. The extent to which RPOs actively assist their member towns with cooperative purchasing or service delivery opportunities varies widely. Currently, only two RPOs directly operate purchasing programs.

Since 1968, CRCOG has operated a voluntary purchasing cooperative called the Capitol Region Purchasing Council (CRPC). Membership is open to municipalities, boards of education, and other governmental agencies in the state, each of which pays annual membership dues. CRPC currently has 67 members. This includes one or more entities from all of the towns that belong to CRCOG as well as one or more entities operating in 34 other towns in the state.

The council functions as a supplemental procurement office for its members and serves as a clearinghouse for the collection and distribution of purchasing-related information. Members have access to a secure, automated, online bidding system that they can use to manage competitive and other procurement processes over the Internet. Total savings by members in FY 07 were estimated at \$1.5 million. The savings among individual towns for a product category such as "grass seed and fertilizer" ranged from \$337 to \$22,752; savings for "treated road salt" ranged from \$150 to \$24,000.¹⁷

In 1996, SWRPA created the South Western Region Purchasing Cooperative, a voluntary program open to all SWRPA member towns. There is no charge for towns to participate, and other towns may join upon an affirmative vote of the cooperative members. Municipal purchasing staff take turns as the lead to handle specific bids, providing technical assistance to SWRPA staff regarding information needed for successful execution of that bid. After bid specifications are developed, invitations are sent to vendors, and legal notices are placed in local newspapers. The lowest responsive and responsible bidder is accepted, and member towns enter

¹⁷ Capitol Region Council of Governments web page [[http:// www.crcog.org/purchasing%20_coun/member.html](http://www.crcog.org/purchasing%20_coun/member.html)], August 30, 2007.

into contracts/agreements with the selected vendor when they need the specific goods or services.¹⁸

While all of the RPOs indicated a willingness to help member towns obtain information about specific purchases, several noted a lack of interest among their members for this service. Many municipalities are eligible to take advantage of bids obtained by the Department of Administrative Services for state agencies, and some also make use of federal procurement lists. Still others, especially some of the smaller towns in the state, informally work with neighboring towns. They may buy expensive, limited use items jointly for use on an individual basis as needed. Or, they might recruit someone for the same type of position, and each hire the person for a limited number of hours that when combined equals a full-time job.

Other. State law gives RPOs a lot of discretion in the types of activities they perform so they can respond to the needs of their member towns and address the issues important to the region as a whole. Table III-5 provides examples of the wide array of activities undertaken by the RPOs directly on behalf of their member towns, and the examples show the value of the RPOs in providing a regional perspective. It should be noted that the examples contained in the table are meant to be illustrative of the range of activities performed not the scope of work of each RPO. All of the RPOs carry out many other functions besides those listed in the table, and multiple RPOs carry out many of the tasks listed in the table for a single RPO.

One function RPOs previously provided that is no longer as important is serving as the Census Data Center for their respective regions. The availability of so much census information on-line has greatly reduced the need for RPOs to provide this service.

One authority that does not apply to all types of RPOs is ownership of property. In 2000, Regional Councils of Governments received statutory authorization to purchase real property to use as administrative office space for the council itself.

¹⁸ South Western Regional Planning Agency web page [<http://www.swrpa.org/projects/PurchasingCo-Op.htm>], September 7, 2007.

Table III-5. Examples of Types of Activities Performed by Connecticut RPOs for Member Towns	
Region	Example of RPO Activity
Capitol Region Council of Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> developed Regional Emergency Deployment Plan (CRED) member of regional collaboration project on People, Prosperity & Place
Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> participate in central Connecticut Economic Development Alliance prepared “Busway West” Plan to improve accessibility
Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide administrative services to Connecticut River Gateway Commission used grant from Connecticut DEP to develop an in-water trail guide for areas located along the lower reaches of the Connecticut River
Council of Governments of Central Naugatuck Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> organized and funded regional recycling program and oversee household hazardous waste program helped with efforts to obtain state designation for Naugatuck River Greenway
Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide staff to implement and administer the Greater Bridgeport Affordable Housing Compact worked with Bridgeport Port Authority to finalize market and operation plans for a Container Feeder Port Barge Service to link Bridgeport Harbor with the ports of New York and New Jersey
Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> coordinate Regional Public Health Mutual Aid Agreement provide administrative support to Housatonic Resources Recovery Authority
Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> administer Urban Action Rural Facade Improvement Program joint Public Safety Task Force with Northwestern CT COG
Midstate Regional Planning Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide assistance to Connecticut River Gateway Commission prepared linguistic analysis of region’s population to facilitate accessibility to transportation planning
Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> prepare “administrative” audits for member towns prepared comprehensive economic development strategy with WINCOG to qualify for funding from U.S. Economic Development Agency
Northwestern Connecticut Council of Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> prepared Housatonic River Management Plan for Housatonic River Commission provide administrative support for Fuel Bank for towns in region
South Central Regional Council of Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> prepared environmental impact evaluation for new railroad station in West Haven or Orange developed regional trail maps for hikers
Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide staff to Route 11 Greenway Authority Commission helping towns in the region establish a Regional Dog Pound
South Western Regional Planning Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> utilized grant from DEP Long Island Sound Fund to produce canoe/kayak in-water trail guide for Norwalk Islands developing detailed inventory of protected open space parcels in Connecticut’s southwestern region with the intent to promote best practices in open space acquisition and stewardship
Valley Council of Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> operate regional Brownfields Partnership for 25 towns in west central Connecticut provided staff to Paramedic Task Force examining delivery of pre-hospital paramedic care in the region
Windham Region Council of Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> co-chair subcommittee of 10-year Plan to End Homelessness prepared maps for member town to apply for two recreational trails grants
Sources of data: Web sites for individual RPOs and interviews with RPO directors.	

Chapter Four

Resources

An important factor controlling the breadth and depth of the activities undertaken by the 15 Regional Planning Organizations in Connecticut is the quantity of resources available to each. As described in more detail below, the annual operating budgets of the individual RPOs in state FY 07 ranged from \$176,000 to \$7 million, including federal funding passed through the RPO to member towns. The number of staff employed per RPO ranges from 1.5 to 20 people, although some organizations hire additional outside consultants to perform specific tasks.

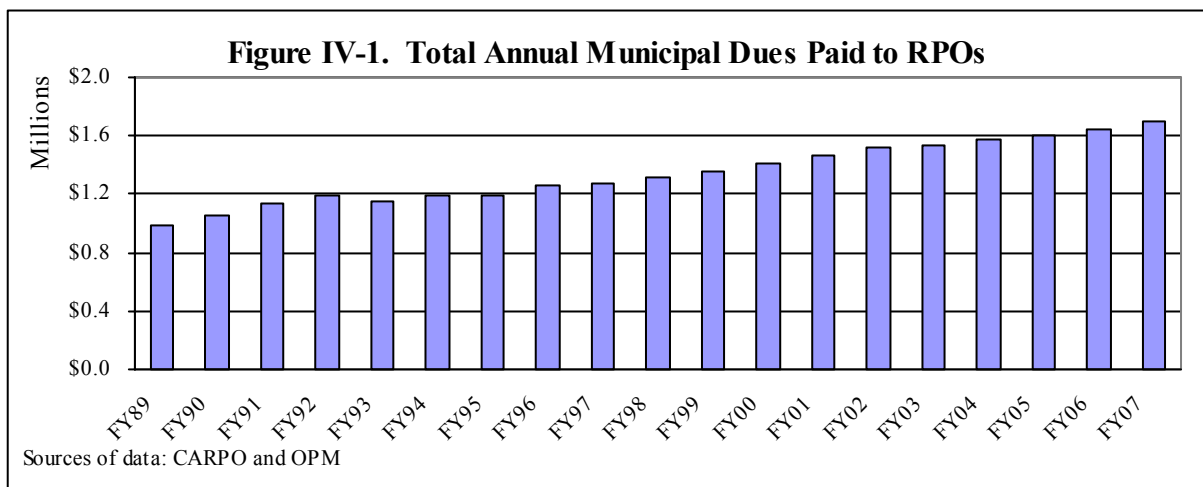
Funding

Regional Planning Organizations in Connecticut do not have any revenue raising power (i.e., taxing authority). However, they are statutorily authorized to accept money from a variety of public and private sources. The primary revenue sources for RPOs are:

- dues and fees from member towns;
- state grants-in-aid (SGIA) for planning functions, distributed by OPM; and
- federal grants, primarily for transportation and homeland security purposes.

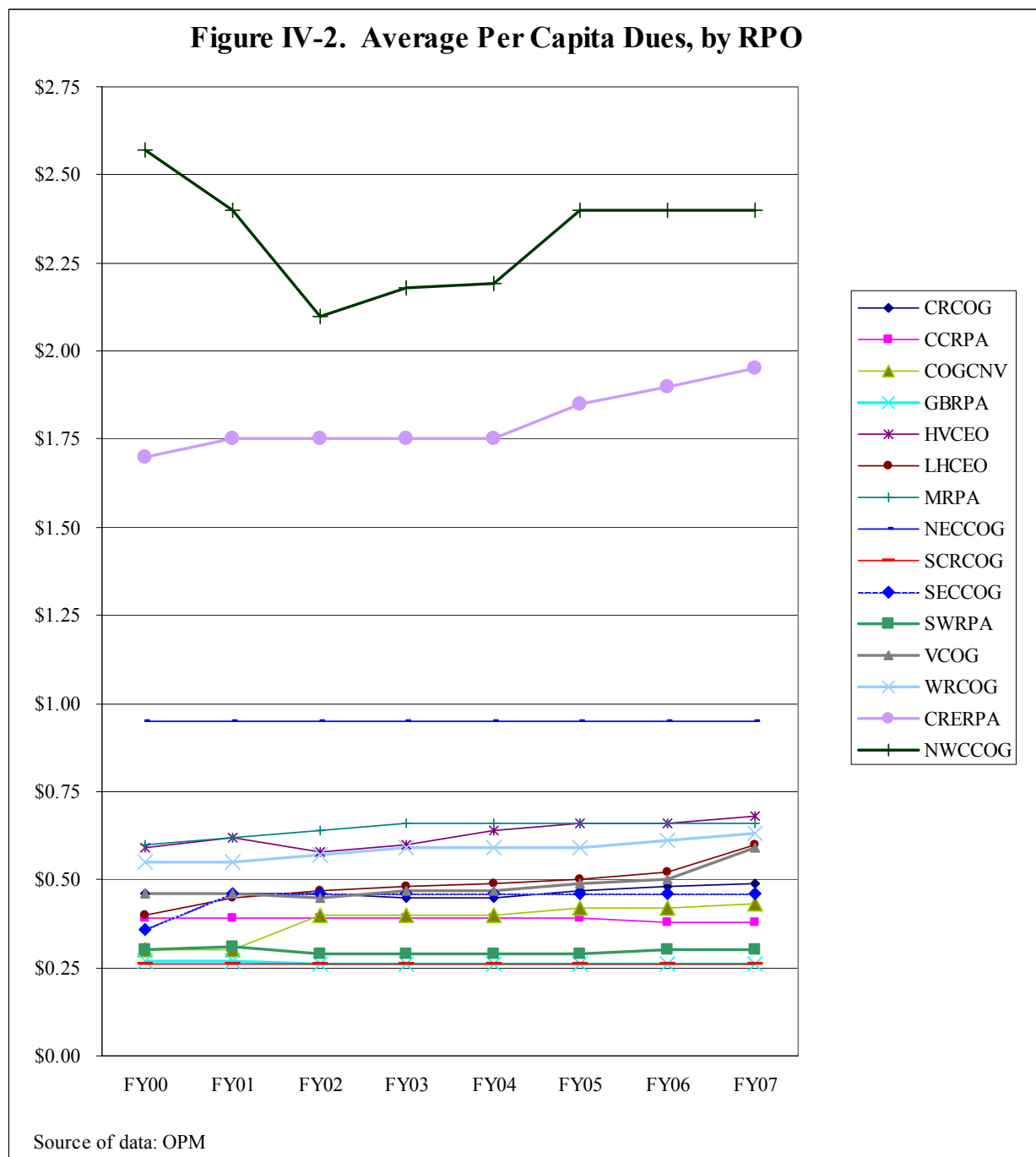
In FY 07, the 15 RPOs received a combined total of \$16 million in revenue from all sources.

Member dues. The total amount of the dues paid annually by all member towns to their respective RPOs has increased about 70 percent since FY 89. Figure IV-1 shows the total amount of municipal dues paid annually since then.



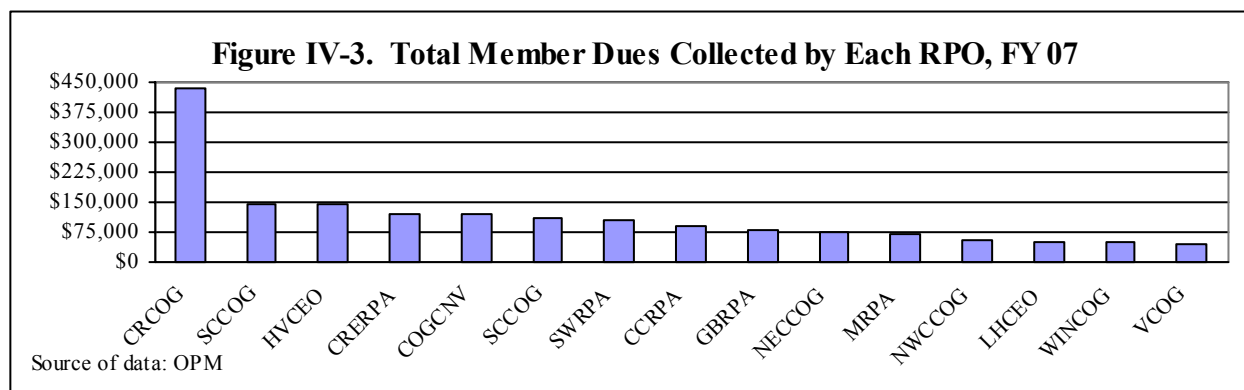
Each RPO is allowed to establish its own system for calculating how much member towns will pay in dues. Most of the RPOs, regardless of type, charge member towns on a per capita basis. In a few cases, there is a minimum base amount that all members pay, but even then there may be a distinction made between urban and rural towns. Several RPOs use formulas that take into consideration multiple factors. One such formula (used by at least two

RPOs) is based on three factors -- population, land area, and wealth as measured by the Grand List of each member town. Figure IV-2 shows the average per capita dues rate charged by each RPO from FY 00 through FY 07.



As can be seen in the figure, the average per capita rates for the 15 RPOs during FY 07 ranged from 26 cents to \$2.40. Thirteen of the RPOs charged less than one dollar, with 10 charging between 38 cents and 68 cents.

Figure IV-3 shows the total amount of membership dues each RPO collected for FY 07. The amounts range from slightly less than \$50,000 to \$437,000. In total, the RPOs received \$1.7 million in dues from their member towns in FY 07.



In return for their dues, member towns receive a basic array of services that usually includes review of required zoning and subdivision changes as well as structured discussions about issues such as housing and the environment. Of course, RPO staff also prepare the Regional Plan of Development for approval by the RPO board. In addition, some RPOs may provide a certain amount of general consultative time that each town can use as needed. In other instances, where individual towns want the RPO staff to perform specific tasks such as preparing the local conservation and development plan or helping revise local land use regulations, the RPO will receive additional compensation for that work.

State grants. The state has provided SGIA funds to the RPOs since 1959. Originally only Regional Planning Agencies were eligible for the money, but since 1978, all RPOs receive this type of funding.

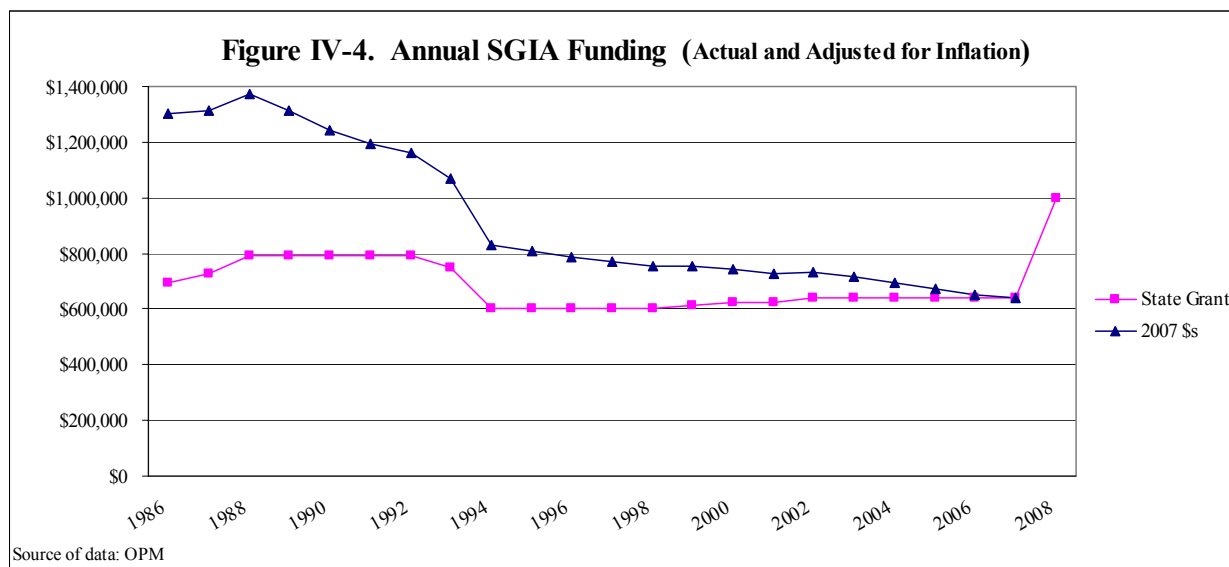
The amount of the grant is determined annually by a statutory formula (C.G.S. Sec. 4-124q). Each RPO receives the same base amount of money; then those that raised more than the base amount in local dues receive a pro-rated share of the remainder of that year's total state appropriation for the program.

For FY 08, the total SGIA allocation is \$1 million; the minimum base grant amount was \$53,000. Table IV-1 lists the total amount of SGIA funding each RPO received this year.

SGIA funds are supposed to provide RPOs with financial assistance toward the cost of their statutory planning functions. However, several of the RPO executive directors noted that the money is insufficient to cover the cost of preparing a Regional Plan of Development or even allowing for detailed comments on the statutorily required referrals of certain zoning and subdivision changes submitted by municipalities in the region.

Table IV-1. FY 08 SGIA	
RPO	Grant
CRCOG	\$138,434
SCRCOG	\$73,565
HVCEO	\$73,386
CRERPA	\$68,175
COGCNV	\$67,642
SCCOG	\$66,044
SWRPA	\$64,699
CCRPA	\$60,781
GBRPA	\$58,828
NECCOG	\$58,434
MRPA	\$57,322
NWCCOG	\$53,689
LHCEO	\$53,000
VCOG	\$53,000
WINCOG	\$53,000
Source of data: OPM	

Figure IV-4 shows the total amount of SGIA funding disbursed annually during the past 20 years. The figure displays the actual total as well as the amount adjusted for inflation. The annual allocation for the current fiscal year is \$1 million, the first increase in seven years. Until then, based on the inflation-adjusted dollars, the relatively flat funding since 1995 had resulted in a one-quarter decline in the purchasing power of this category of support for the RPOs.



RPOs can also receive purpose-specific state funding, but the amount and frequency are more variable. One of the most common uses of these funds is for activities related to the environment (e.g., recycling, hazardous waste, and Rails to Trails).

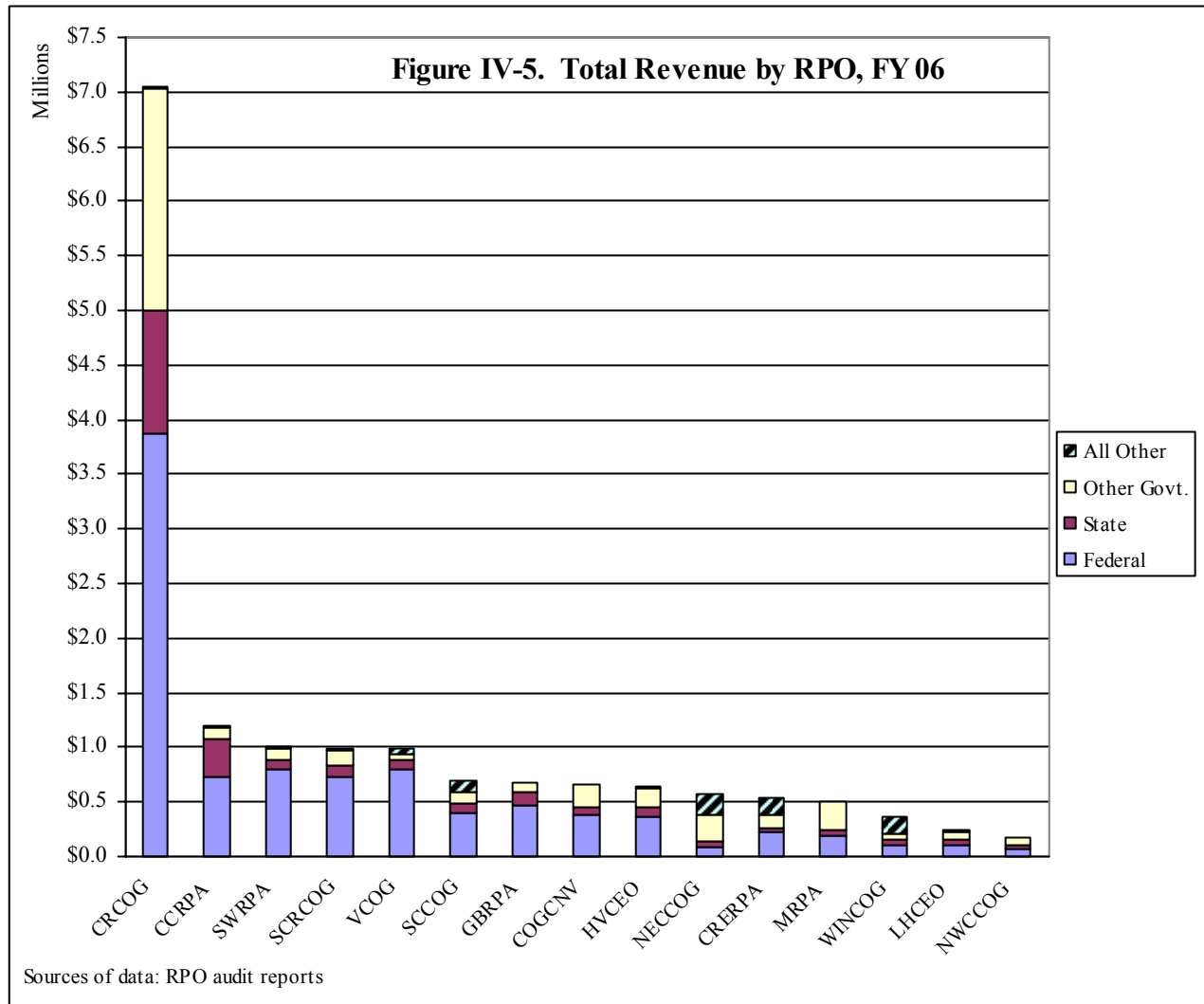
Federal grants. RPOs serve as the conduit for several different kinds of federal grants. In some instances, the federal government sends the money directly to the RPOs for them to pass through to the towns in their regions; in other cases, the RPOs receive the funds from the state agency responsible for that subject area.

In the case of federal transportation dollars, the amount of and manner in which the money is received by each RPO depends on their designation as an urban or rural region, using Federal Highway Administration definitions. Most of this money represents a pass through of funding from the federal government through the MPO to the town governments within the region that is served by the RPO.

Total revenues. A few of the larger RPOs in the state also obtain funds from other governmental entities or private organizations to operate specific programs or provide services for member towns or the citizens of those towns. For example, CRCOG coordinates a Jobs Access Program that provides transportation to work sites in the Greater Hartford area for more than 3,000 workers every workday, while several other RPOs receive money to operate paratransit districts.

Another source of income for RPOs is interest earned on the reserves they have on deposit in financial institutions. In FY 06, these amounts ranged from \$121 to \$25,513. Most received less than \$5,000.

Total revenue for the 15 RPOs in FY 06 varied widely, ranging from \$176,000 (Northwestern) to \$7 million (Capitol). Only one RPO received more than \$1.2 million; the median amount of revenue was \$661,000. Figure IV-5 summarizes the revenues received by the individual RPOs during FY 06, based on the annual audit each filed with OPM for that year. The figure shows the amount of money provided by different government levels as well as an “all other” category (which contains fees for service, interest income, etc.).



Future opportunities. Legislation passed during the 2007 General Assembly session included up to \$10 million in additional state funding for RPOs. \$1.4 million will be used to enhance Geographic Information System (GIS) services provided by the state. The remaining \$8.6 million will pay for a new competitive grant program to encourage regional cooperation among municipalities.

Staffing

The number and type of staff employed by the individual RPOs varies considerably. The composition depends on the emphasis each RPO places on particular activities as well as the

needs of member towns, especially for services such as assistance with planning, zoning, or mapping tasks. To achieve the mix of personnel that meets the needs of their particular region:

- some RPOs employ multiple planners on staff, while others focus on people with specialized skills such as knowledge of GIS and mapping;
- some have limited administrative support staff, while others have multiple people in this category;
- some use part-time staff to increase the range of skills they have access to; and
- some rely on outside consultants for one-time studies or reviews occurring at intermittent intervals.

Each RPO employs an executive director. In FY 07, their length of service ranged from just about one year to nearly 40 years. One quarter of the directors had been in the position for less than three years, but seven had been directors for more than 15 years. Table IV-2 indicates the total number of positions each RPO had at the end of FY 07.

Table IV-2. Staff Employed by Individual RPOs, June 2007			
<i>Name of RPO</i>	<i>Number of Professional Staff</i>	<i>Number of Administrative Staff</i>	<i>Total Staff</i>
Capitol Region Council of Governments	15	5	20
Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency	7	2	9
Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Agency	7	2	9
Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley	6	2	8
Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency	7	2	9
Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials	3	2 part-time	4 FTE
Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials	1	1 part time	1.5
Midstate Regional Planning Agency	2	2	4
Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments	3	1	4*
Northwestern Connecticut Council of Governments	1	1	2
South Central Regional Council of Governments	6	1	7
Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments	8	1	9
South Western Regional Planning Agency	8	1	9
Valley Council of Governments	3	2	5
Windham Region Council of Governments	2.5	1	3.5
FTE = full-time equivalent			
*also employs 1 animal control officer, 3 part-time assistant animal control officers, and 11 transit drivers.			
Sources of data: documents from and interviews with RPO executive directors			

Chapter Five

Conservation and Development Planning in Connecticut

As mentioned earlier, the impetus for Regional Planning Organizations in the 1940s and 1950s came from the recognition that more coordinated planning was needed in Connecticut for the economic well-being of its citizens. Further, one of the primary statutory duties given to RPOs, once they were established, was the preparation of a Regional Plan of Development. As the middle ground between the individual Municipal Conservation and Development Plans and the State Plan of Conservation and Development, the regional plan is an important mechanism to balance local interests with the overall goals of the state.

Conservation and development plans are used at all levels of government to provide a vision and general idea of how land should be used to assure public health, safety, and welfare. In Connecticut, conservation and development planning is statutorily mandated at the local, regional, and state level. Since the 1970s, the issue of inconsistency among the three planning levels has been noted in a number of reports produced for the Connecticut General Assembly, and recommendations to better integrate planning to promote consistency among the various plans have been proposed several times.

The strength of “home rule” and the autonomy of local government to make land use decisions in Connecticut’s 169 towns is part of the foundation of Connecticut government. Thus, although state law mandates the State C&D Plan incorporate and integrate a wide variety of interrelated traditional policy areas (i.e., economic development, transportation, housing, and land use decisions), the State C&D Plan is primarily an advisory document at the local level.

By law, OPM is responsible for coordinating regional and state planning activities, and accomplishing such planning activities as may be necessary. This chapter describes state mandates regarding conservation and development planning at the state, regional, and local level. It includes a description of the statutory processes that must be followed for adopting each type of plan, the major elements plans must address, and the extent of OPM review of regional plans.

State Plan of Conservation and Development

The State Plan of Conservation and Development is statutorily required under Chapter 297 (C.G.S. Sections 16a-24 through 16a-33). The plan serves as a statement of the development, resource management, and public investment policies of the state. The plan provides a framework for evaluating other state agency plans and proposals as well as regional and local plans submitted to OPM for review through mandated review processes. The most recent State C&D Plan, effective from 2005 to 2010, was adopted by the legislature and signed into law under Public Act 05-205.

Appendix C depicts the evolution of the State Plan of Conservation and Development since it was first required in the 1970s. Originally conceived as the official state policy for land and water resource conservation and development, the legislature has increasingly required

additional policy areas be integrated into the plan, such as transportation, housing, energy, air, environment, and economic development.

Legislative committee. A key participant in the process is the Continuing Legislative Committee on State Planning and Development (CLCSPD). This 10-member committee was originally established in 1967, and now consists of five senate members and five house members. The chairs of this committee are also the chairs of the legislature's standing Committee on Planning and Development. Under C.G.S. Sec. 4-60d, the committee is charged with establishing broad goals and objectives for the physical and economic development of the state and transmitting those to the secretary of OPM. The committee also must approve any interim changes to the State Plan of Conservation and Development.

Process for plan revision. Under the law, OPM must revise the conservation and development plan every five years after consulting with "all appropriate state, regional, and local agencies and other appropriate persons." The statutory process for revising the plan allows CLCSPD and government agencies to have input into the preliminary draft conservation and development plan leading up to the development of a draft plan for public review

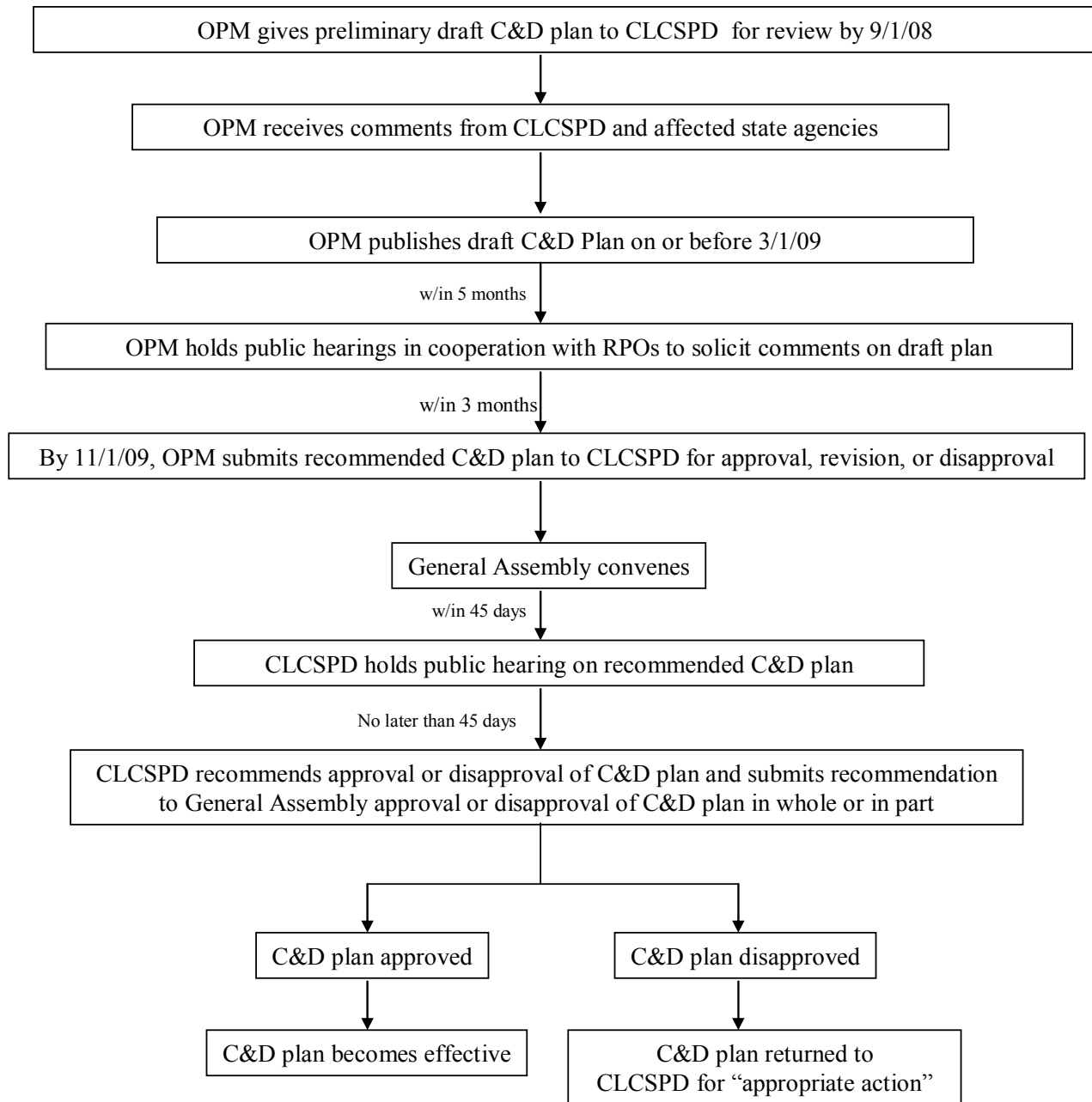
Figure V-1 shows the statutory process OPM must follow during the next state C&D planning cycle. As shown in the figure, OPM must:

- present a preliminary draft plan to the Continuing Legislative Committee on State Planning and Development for preliminary review by September 1, 2008 (two years before the current plan expires);
- publish and circulate copies of the revised draft plan by March 1, 2009;
- hold public hearings, in cooperation with the Regional Planning Organizations, between March and July 31, 2009; and
- consider the comments received at those hearings, make any changes to the proposed plan, if necessary, and submit the recommended plan to CLSPD for its approval, revision, or disapproval by November 1, 2009.

The Continuing Legislative Committee on State Planning and Development must then hold its hearing on the document and advise the legislature on whether to approve or disapprove the plan. It must do both within 45 days after the legislature convenes for a regular session. If the General Assembly approves the plan, it becomes effective. If it disapproves the plan, it is returned to CLCSPD for "appropriate action." The statute does not define any process for revising the plan if it is disapproved by the General Assembly.

Plan content. The law requires the State C&D Plan to address certain broad policy areas, linking housing, transportation, and economic development objectives with land use. In addition, the 2005-2010 plan introduces six Growth Management Principles and associated policy recommendations in order to better integrate state planning functions across state agencies and provide more guidance for municipalities and Regional Planning Organizations when they revise their own plans. The plan is comprised of two separate components – the plan text and the Locational Guide Map.

Figure V-1. 2010 – 2015 State Conservation and Development Plan Revision Process



Source: LPR&IC

The plan text is based on the six growth management principles. Those are:

- redevelop and revitalize regional centers and areas with existing or currently planned physical infrastructure;
- expand housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types and needs;
- concentrate development around transportation nodes and along major transportation corridors to support the viability of transportation options;
- conserve and restore the natural environment, cultural and historical resources, and traditional rural lands;
- protect and ensure the integrity of environment assets critical to public health and safety; and
- promote integrated planning across all levels of government to address issues on a statewide, regional, and local basis.

The other plan component, the Locational Guide Map, divides the state into four types of development areas and four types of conservation areas (shown in Table V-1). The map is developed from demographic, census, density, land use, and natural resource data. While municipal C&D plans often serve as a guide in adoption of zoning regulations that address allowable density of development or use (e.g., residential versus commercial), the Locational Guide Map is a policy guide encouraging the protection of resources over large areas, such as watersheds or ridges. It is important because it serves as a geographic map depicting the state's conservation and development policies and focuses on how state dollars should be invested to encourage desirable development.

Table V-1. Types of Development and Conservation Areas in Locational Guide Map	
<i>Development Areas</i>	<i>Conservation Areas</i>
Regional Centers	Existing Preserved Open Space
Neighborhood Conservation Areas	Preservation Areas
Growth Areas	Conservation Areas
Rural Community Centers	Rural Lands
Source of data: State Conservation and Development Plan 2005 – 2010	

Plan applicability. The state plan is largely an advisory document at the state, regional, and local level, although certain state-funded development projects must be consistent with it. State law requires state agency actions ***be consistent*** with the plan for certain federal- or state-funded developments including:

- acquisition of real property when the acquisition costs exceed \$200,000;
- development or improvement of real property when development costs exceed \$200,000;
- acquisition of public transportation equipment or facilities when the acquisition costs are in excess of \$200,000;

- acquisition, development, or improvement of public transportation equipment or facilities when the acquisition cost exceeds \$200,000; and
- the third phase of UConn 2000.¹⁹

In each of these cases, state law requires a state agency to request, and OPM to provide, an advisory statement commenting on whether the agency's actions conform to the plan. The secretary of OPM must also submit the advisory statement to the State Bond Commission, which must consider the statement prior to allocating any bond funds.

In addition to the state agency actions described above, state law requires the Economic Strategic Plan, to be developed by DECD by July 1, 2009, be consistent with the State C&D Plan, while other agency plans need only *consider* the State C&D Plan. Table V-2 lists the state agencies and plans that are required to consider the State C&D Plan.

Table V-2. State Agency Plans Required to Consider the State C&D Plan	
<i>Agency</i>	<i>Type of Plan</i>
ConnDOT	Individual Airport Plans Long Range Transportation Plan Master Transportation Plan Statewide Bicycle Plan
DECD	Statewide Housing Plan Statewide Economic Development Plan
DEP	2020 Park Plan Connecticut Climate Change Action Plan Clean Water Funding Priority List Green Plan State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Trails Plan Wastewater Planning
Department of Public Health	Long Term Water Plan
Community-Technical Colleges	Community Technical College Campus Development Plan
State University System	State University Master Plan
ConnDOT/DEP	Public Transportation Plan
Source of data: OPM	

Priority funding areas. The OPM secretary is statutorily required to develop recommendations for setting and revising boundaries for priority funding areas (i.e., geographic areas that would receive priority for state funding, such as enterprise zones). These designations are subject to legislative approval. The secretary is also required to consult with RPOs, the chairman of the Transportation Strategy Board, and the economic and community development, environmental protection, public works, agriculture, and transportation commissioners. The secretary must submit his recommendations to the Continuing Legislative Committee on State Planning and Development for its review in conjunction with its review of the 2010 – 2015 State

¹⁹ For the specified items, P.A. 07-239 increased the threshold from \$100,000 to \$200,000 effective July 1, 2007.

Conservation and Development Plan. The continuing committee must submit its recommendations for priority funding areas to the legislature at the time the plan is submitted. The boundaries of the priority funding areas then become effective upon the approval of the legislature. Once the boundaries are effective, each state agency must review its regulations and modify them to carry out coordinated management of growth-related projects in priority funding areas.

Interim plan changes during five-year cycle. State law delineates the process for interim plan changes during the five-year planning term. Any plan change requires the approval of the Continuing Legislative Committee on State Planning and Development. After receiving approval from CLCSPD, the OPM secretary can undertake interim changes to the plan upon the secretary's own initiative or upon application by:

- the chief elected official of a municipality, with approval of the municipality's legislative body, only if:
 - the municipality in which the change is proposed has a conservation and development plan that has been updated within the last 10 years; and
 - the application includes written evidence giving the opinion of the municipal planning commission regarding the interim change;
- or**
- any owner of real property or anyone with an interest in the property on which a change is proposed.

The secretary of OPM adopted regulations to establish procedures for applications for interim changes to the plan. The regulations include:

- provisions for interviews and consultations with relevant agencies or persons, such as the local planning and zoning commissions (or in municipalities without zoning commissions, the person charged with making those decisions); and
- public hearing requirements.

Process for interim change. When the OPM secretary receives an application for a change to the State C&D Plan, there are two separate processes that must be followed depending on whether the change is to the plan text or the Locational Guide Map. In both cases, the secretary notifies the CLCSPD. For applicants seeking a change to the plan text, CLCSPD must hold a public hearing within 30 days of the receipt of the application and OPM then has 10 days to provide the committee with a report of its findings and recommendations. After receipt of the OPM report, the committee has 30 days to render a decision.

For applications seeking a change in the Locational Guide Map, OPM must notify, in addition to the committee, the chief elected official or persons designated to exercise planning or zoning powers in the municipality that is the subject of a change application and any legislators representing the area. After such notification, a joint public hearing by the OPM secretary and

the Continuing Legislative Committee on State Planning and Development is held in the municipality *if* one is requested by its chief elected official or a member of the planning or zoning committee(s). The committee must review the nature of the request and may consult directly with the applicant, the secretary of OPM, state and local agencies, the RPO in the region, and any other persons or agencies in order to gain further knowledge regarding the application.

The continuing legislative committee must also hold a separate hearing, in addition to any hearing required to be held in any municipality, concerning the proposed change to the map. After this public hearing, the continuing legislative committee must approve or disapprove the application and notify the OPM secretary of its decision within 10 days following the hearing. The secretary must make interim changes in the plan to reflect the approved changes, if applicable.

A report written by the Office of Legislative Research notes that an increasing number of developers and other parties are submitting applications for changes to the Locational Guide Map. It indicated many of these applications are a result of the Department of Environmental Protection's policy regarding the possible denial of state funding for sewer projects in rural areas, if the project is inconsistent with the State C&D Plan, and there is no identified public health or environmental problem. (DEP usually requires that modifications to local sewer service area plans be consistent with the State C&D Plan.)²⁰

Number and type of applications for plan changes. Program review committee staff examined data related to the number and type of applications for map changes since 1988. Based on data provided by OPM, requests to revise the map have become much more frequent over the years. Since 1988, there have been 23 interim change applications with 19 of them (83 percent) submitted during the last six years. Of these, 13 were related to sewer service expansion; nine concerned requests for state aid; and one was from the Department of Public Safety seeking to build a new facility. The majority of the applications came from the chief executive officer of a town (14), while eight were from developers, and one was from a state agency.

Table V-3 compares the decision rendered by the CLCSPD on interim plan requests to OPM's recommendation. Of the 23 applications, OPM recommended to the CLCSPD that: 12 applications be approved; four be opposed; and six receive partial support. No recommendation has yet been made in one application, which is pending. The committee decisions were: 16 approved; two denied; four partially approved; and one with no vote yet.

Table V-3. Decisions on Interim Plan Application Requests (1988 – Present)		
<i>Decision</i>	<i>OPM (recommended)</i>	<i>CLCSPD</i>
Approve	12	16
Deny	4	2
Partial	6	4
Pending	1	1
Total	23	23
Source of data: OPM		

²⁰ Office of Legislative Research, 2006-R-0452.

Regional Plans of Development

Regional planning organizations are also statutorily required to have regional development plans. The law requires the plan be “based on studies of physical, social, economic and governmental conditions and trends and shall be designed to promote with the greatest efficiency and economy the coordinated development of its area of operation and the general welfare and prosperity of its people.” It also requires the plan to:

- show recommendations for the general use of the area including land use, housing, principal highways, recreational space, public utilities, agriculture, and other matters determined to be beneficial to the area;
- promote abatement of the pollution of the waters and air of the region;
- identify areas where it is feasible and prudent to have compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented mixed use development patterns and land reuse, and promote such development patterns and land reuse; and
- note any inconsistencies with the six growth management principles contained in the State C&D Plan.

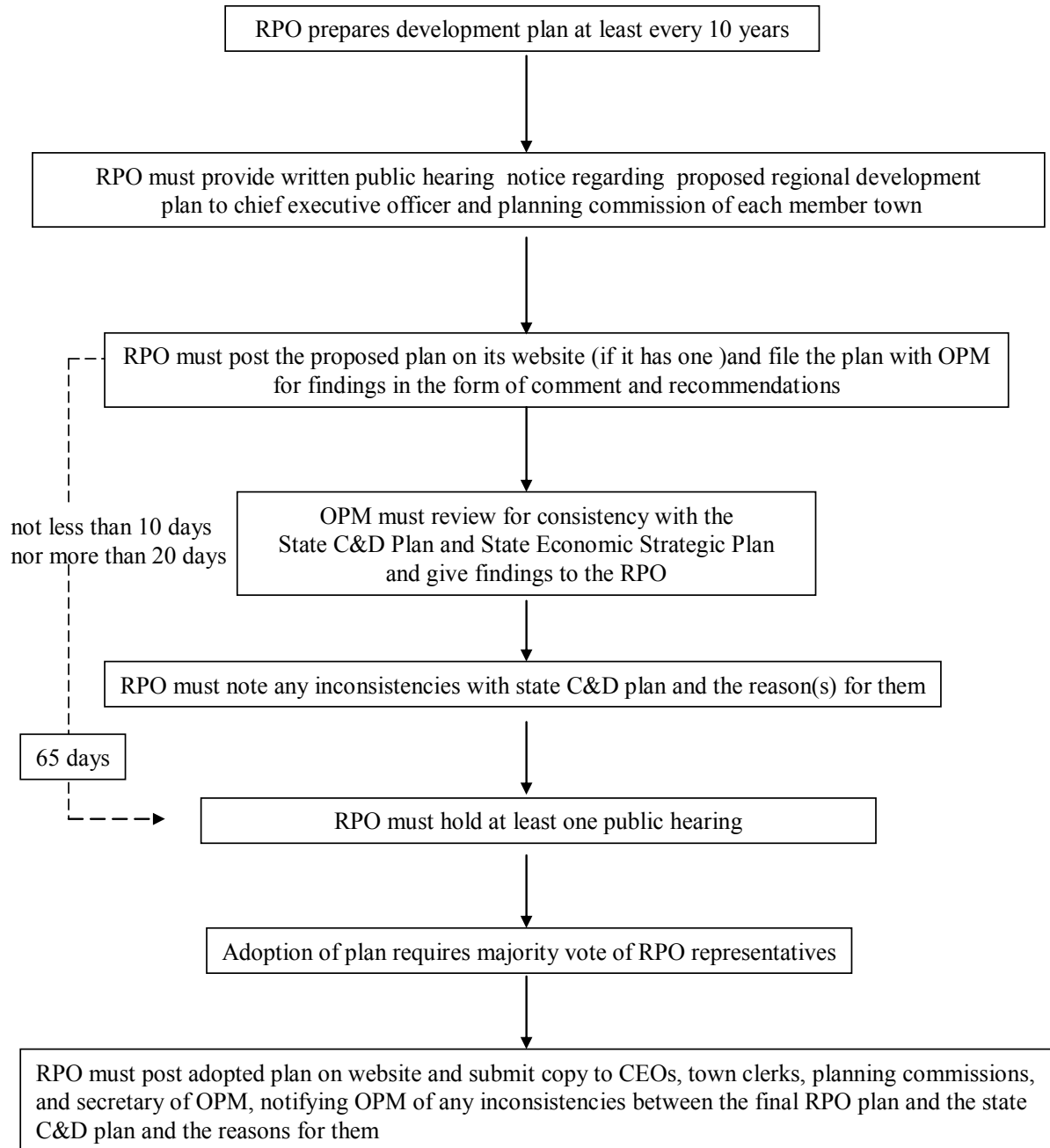
Until recently, although the law required each RPO to adopt a plan of development, it set no time frame for doing so. In 2005, the legislature began requiring plans of development to be updated at least once every 10 years and that an initial revision begin no more than three years after July 1, 2005 (i.e., by July 1, 2008).

In practice, some of the executive directors of the Regional Planning Organizations stated that their particular regional plan was developed by examining each of the local plans of conservation and development of the member towns in the region and aggregating them on a regional level. Some of the directors stated that this process could be difficult if the local municipalities have not updated their plans within a reasonable time frame.

Process for adoption of Regional Plan of Development. The process to adopt a Regional Plan of Development is laid out in statute and shown in Figure V-2. There are recently adopted time frames associated with each of the steps, and these are shown in the figure.

The process requires an RPO to hold at least one public hearing with written notice provided to each municipality’s chief executive officer and planning commission. At least 65 days before the public hearing, the RPO must post the plan on the internet, if it has a website, and submit a copy to the secretary of OPM for comments and recommendations. The findings by OPM must include a review of the plan to determine if the proposed plan is “not inconsistent” with the State C&D Plan and the State Economic Strategic Plan (due July 2009). To date, more than half of RPOs have submitted development plans to OPM and all have been determined to be consistent with the state plan.

Figure V-2. Regional Plan of Development Approval Process



Source: LPR&IC

Prior to the public hearing, the law requires the RPO to note on the record any inconsistency with the state plan and the reasons for such inconsistency, but it does not require the regional plan be made consistent with the state plan. In particular, the regional plan must note any inconsistencies with the growth management principles included in the state plan. Adoption of the plan, any part of the plan, or an amendment to the plan requires an affirmative vote of not less than a majority of the representatives on the RPO board. Once adopted, the plan must be posted on the website, if there is one, and a signed copy must be transmitted to the chief executive officer and the planning commission, if any, in the towns that are members of the region, and to OPM.

Municipal Conservation and Development Plans

Municipalities are also required by law to have conservation and development plans. Municipal planning commissions are required to prepare, or amend, and adopt plans of conservation and development at least once every 10 years, and regularly review and maintain the plans.

Legislation adopted last session strengthens the link between discretionary state-funding and maintaining and revising municipal C&D plans at least every 10 years. If a municipality has not updated its plan within a 10-year period, the chief elected official must submit a letter to the OPM secretary and the commissioners of transportation, economic and community development, and environmental protection explaining the reasons why. In addition, a copy of the letter must be included in each application the municipality submits to any state agency for funding for conservation and development of real property. Until the plan is updated, the municipality is ineligible for any discretionary state funding, unless such prohibition is expressly waived by the OPM secretary.

Plan contents. In preparing the municipal plan, the local planning commission may appoint one or more special committees to develop and make recommendations. By statute, there are 10 areas the commission or special committee must consider, including the:

- community development action plan of the municipality, if any;
- need for affordable housing;
- need for protection of existing and potential public surface and ground drinking water supplies;
- use of cluster development and other development patterns to the extent consistent with soil types, terrain, and infrastructure capacity within the municipality;
- State Plan of Conservation and Development;
- Regional Plan of Development;
- physical, social, economic, and governmental conditions and trends;
- needs of the municipality including but not limited to human resources, education, health, housing, recreation, social services, public utilities, public protection, transportation and circulation, and cultural and interpersonal communications;

- objectives of energy-efficient patterns of development, and the use of solar and other renewable forms of energy and energy conservation; and
- protection and preservation of agriculture.

The law also requires the plan to:

- be a statement of the policies, goals, and standards for the physical and economic development of the municipality;
- provide for a system of principal thoroughfares, parkways, bridges, streets, sidewalks, multipurpose trails, and other public ways as appropriate;
- be designed to promote, with the greatest efficiency and economy, the coordinated development of the municipality, and the general welfare and prosperity for its people, and identify areas where it is feasible and prudent;
- recommend the most desirable use of land within the municipality for residential, recreational, commercial, industrial, conservation, and other purposes and include a map showing such proposed land uses;
- recommend the most desirable density of population in different parts of the municipality;
- have compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented mixed use development patterns and land reuse; and
- promote such development patterns and land reuse consistent with the state's growth management principles.

Since 2005, any inconsistencies with the growth management principles contained in the State C&D Plan must be noted in the municipal plan, including the principle of integrated planning across all levels of government to address issues on a local, regional, and state-wide basis. Stronger requirements, in terms of what the plan must address, exist for municipalities that are contiguous to Long Island Sound.

Permissive statutory language allows the municipal plan recommendations to address a number of other areas if desired (e.g., recreation, location and improvements for schools and other public buildings, location of public utilities and terminals, and the extent and location of public housing projects).

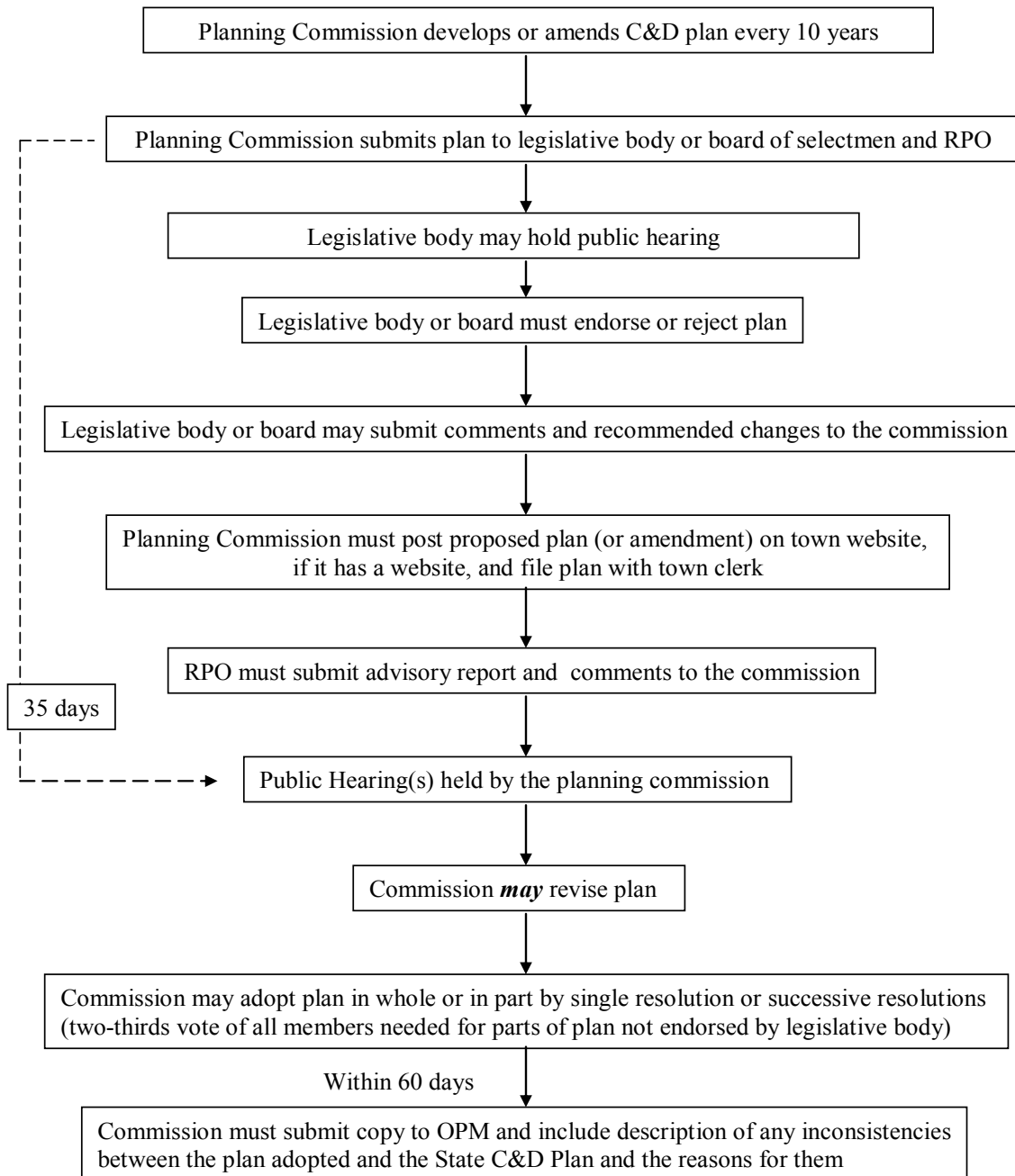
Table V-4 summarizes how long it has been since the towns in the state last adopted a Municipal Conservation and Development Plan. Twenty-seven towns have plans that are more than 10 years old, although some are in the process of being updated. Given the recently adopted legislation that restricts state discretionary funding if a town does not have a plan, all of these towns will likely begin updating their plans in the near future.

Table V-4. Year Last Conservation and Development Plan Adopted (as of July 2007)	
<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Towns*</i>
Pre-1990	5
1990	2
1991	1
1992	3
1993	0
1994	6
1995	6
1996	4
1997	13
1998	7
1999	14
2000	15
2001	11
2002	20
2003	15
2004	15
2005	16
2006	12
2007	5
*Separate plans are done for the city and the town of Groton Source of data: OPM	

Process for adoption of municipal plan. Figure V-3 shows the process for adoption of a Municipal Conservation and Development Plan. At least 35 days prior to holding a public hearing on adoption, the local planning commission (or special committee) must submit a copy of the plan (or amendment) for review and comment to the legislative body or, if that body is a town meeting, the board of selectmen. The legislative body or board may hold one or more public hearings on the plan and must endorse or reject the entire plan, part of the plan, or amendment; it also may submit comments and recommended changes to the commission.

In addition, the law requires the local planning commission to submit the draft plan to the relevant Regional Planning Organization. It requires the RPO to submit an advisory report along with its comments to the commission at or before the public hearing. The comments must include a finding on the consistency of the draft plan with the Regional Plan of Development and the State Plan of Conservation and Development and the C&D plans of other municipalities in the area of operation of the RPO. The local commission may revise the plan based on the comments submitted, although it can also render a decision on the plan without the report of the Regional Planning Organization.

Figure V-3. Municipal Conservation and Development Plan Approval Process



Source: LPR&IC

After completion of the hearing, the commission may revise the plan, and then may adopt the whole plan or parts of the plan. Any plan or part of a plan or recommendation not endorsed by the legislative body can only be adopted by the commission by a vote of at least two-thirds of all the members of the commission.

Not more than 60 days after adoption of the municipal plan, the commission must submit a copy of the plan to OPM. The submission must include a description of any inconsistency between the municipal plan adopted and the State C&D Plan and the reasons for the inconsistency.

Chapter Six

Survey of Municipal Chief Elected Officials

The program review committee surveyed municipal chief elected officials to gather their opinions on three studies being conducted by the committee -- Regional Planning Organizations in Connecticut, Homeland Security in Connecticut, and the State's Long-Term Planning Efforts. The survey contained 20 questions, of which 10 were directly related to RPOs. As part of the survey, municipal chief elected officials were asked their opinion regarding the roles and responsibilities of RPOs in their region, the current performance of the RPOs in their region, and what future tasks, if any, they would like RPOs to undertake in their region. This chapter highlights the survey results. (A copy of the survey instrument and response totals are contained in Appendix D.)

The committee sent surveys to the chief elected official in each of Connecticut's 169 towns; 101 (or 60 percent) were returned. Although the committee received 101 responses, it is important to note that not every question was answered by all respondents so the response rates vary from question to question.

Survey Results

Based on the results of the survey, it is clear that municipal chief elected officials would like more opportunities to pursue joint service sharing, although they do not want any state mandates requiring them to do so. Furthermore, most of those that wanted to take advantage of joint opportunities cited funding from the state as the number one incentive that would promote this concept. On the other hand, there still was a strong sentiment stressing the voluntary nature of such agreements, and that authority should still rest with local officials on whether or not to come together jointly or go it alone.

Reasons towns join a Regional Planning Organization. A primary purpose of the program review committee's study was to examine how RPOs can be used to encourage towns to come together and provide certain services on a regional rather than a town basis thereby sharing costs. To gain an understanding of why towns currently belong to RPOs, the committee asked municipal chief elected officials to identify, from a list of options, the reasons that their town belonged to the RPO in their planning area. The responses are shown in Table VI-1.

Table VI-1. Why Belong to a Regional Planning Organization (N=99)	
<i>Reason</i>	<i>Percent Selecting Answer</i>
To address issues that cross town boundaries	97%
Facilitate the sharing of services	75%
Improve the way land use decisions are made	61%
Address concerns about environmental issues	58%
Enable town to purchase a item with other towns that it could not afford to buy itself	46%
Make group purchases at a reduced price	43%
Source of data: PRI database	

In addition, 27 percent of the chief elected officials provided “other” responses to this question. These responses ranged from the broad (promote cooperation and problem solving) to the specific (discuss homeland security and transportation issues). Other reasons cited by the chief elected officials included: prioritize municipal issues to lobby legislature, address solid waste disposal and recycling issues, and coordinate economic development.

Functions of RPOs. One group of survey questions listed a variety of functions and activities RPOs could perform in their regions, and chief elected officials were asked to agree or disagree whether they believed, in general, that RPOs should perform these functions. All of the 95 chief elected officials who responded to the question about whether RPOs should review and comment on state development projects that affect their regions agreed they should, and most (91 percent) agreed that RPOs should create and adopt Regional Plans of Development. To a lesser extent (84 percent), the responding chief elected officials agreed that one of the functions of RPOs is to assist with the preparation of Municipal Conservation and Development Plans.

There was also general agreement among chief elected officials regarding the role RPOs should have in reviewing and commenting on local projects with potential for regional impact. Table VI-2 shows that most agreed that RPOs should review and comment on local zoning projects with regional significance. Currently, this is the only type of project of the three listed in the table that RPOs have not been granted statutory authority to do, although it has been proposed numerous times in legislation since the early 1980s.

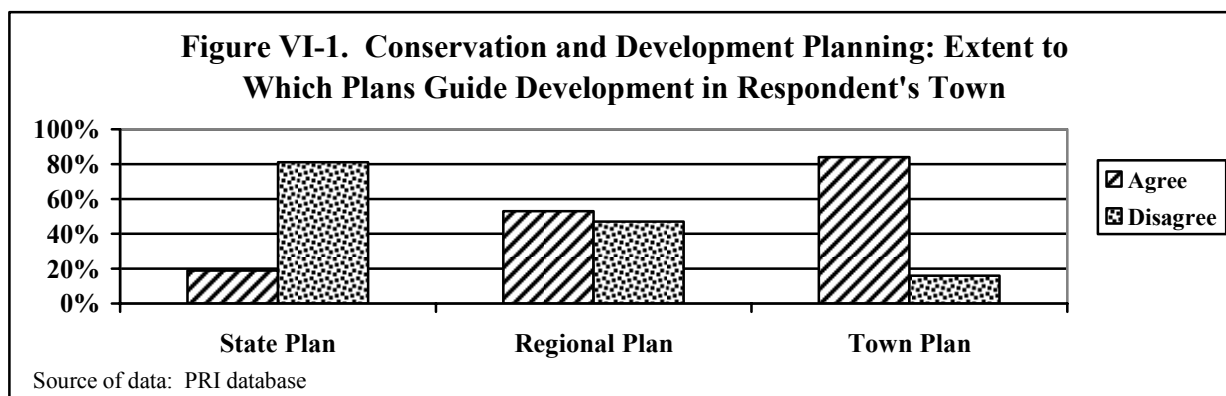
Table VI -2. RPO Input on Local Projects with Potential for Regional Impact		
<i>Review and Comment on Local Projects</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
RPOs should review and comment on LOCAL zoning projects with regional significance (N=91)	92%	8%
RPOs should review and comment on proposed subdivisions that abut or include land in two or more towns (N=92)	91%	9%
RPOs should review and comment on proposed zone use or zone use changes within 500 feet of another town boundary (N=92)	89%	11%
Source of data: PRI database		

Other functions for which there was widespread agreement among chief elected officials that RPOs should perform were in the areas of transportation planning, any tasks that member towns collectively choose, and creating economic development strategies for their regions.

There was less agreement in the survey responses on whether RPOs should assist in the development of zoning regulations for individual towns (26 percent of 90 respondents disagreed); discuss affordable housing issues (18 percent of 90 respondents disagreed); and coordinate emergency management and homeland security efforts (14 percent of 92 respondents disagreed).

Conservation and development planning. With respect to conservation and development planning activities in Connecticut, Figure VI-1 shows the percent of survey respondents agreeing or disagreeing with how much conservation and development within their

town is guided by each of the three levels of development plans. As the figure shows, the vast majority of respondents (81 percent) did not believe that the State C&D Plan is used extensively to guide development in their town. Survey respondents were split on the regional plans, with slightly more than half agreeing that Regional Plans of Development reflect the development issues in their town. In terms of their own local plans of conservation and development, although most believed that their town's plan was effective in guiding development within their town, 16 percent of the respondents disagreed.



The lack of consistency between local and regional plans of conservation and development and the State C&D Plan has been cited often since the 1980s. Currently, the law requires that inconsistencies with the State C&D Plan be noted in the local or regional plan, but OPM cannot require these plans be changed. One survey question asked chief elected officials whether development projects within a town should be required to comply with the State C&D Plan -- one-third of the 85 respondents agreed, and two-thirds disagreed.

RPO membership. Chief elected officials were asked several questions about the boundaries of the existing regional planning areas. The responses indicate that a majority of the 87 respondents (68 percent) believe that eligibility for membership in an RPO should be limited to the state-defined boundaries. However, 93 percent of 89 respondents agreed that these boundaries should be re-evaluated periodically.

Since the type of RPO selected by the member towns determines whether there are chief elected officials or planners on the RPO board, the survey included two questions regarding board composition. Responses indicate:

- slightly more than half of 89 respondents (55 percent) agreed that chief elected officials should be required to serve on the board of the RPO in their area; and
- 64 percent of 86 respondents agreed at least one individual serving on the RPO board should have planning experience.

RPO current efforts and future responsibilities. The committee survey asked chief elected officials to describe the efforts of the RPO in their regions. Of the 91 chief elected officials that responded to the question, 81 percent rated the RPO performance as excellent or good, while 13 percent rated it fair, and 6 percent rated it poor.

Fifty-one of the survey respondents gave written responses to an open-ended survey question that asked what, if any, additional functions they would like the RPO in their region to perform. Of the total responses received, 10 stated no changes were needed. Common areas where respondents suggested RPOs should take on additional functions included economic development planning; affordable housing planning; promoting service sharing and joint purchasing agreements among member towns; and water supply planning. One respondent suggested that RPOs be given the authority to levy a regional tax or to share in a percent of the sales tax in that region.

Promoting regional cooperation. Most respondents (87 percent of 92) believe the state of Connecticut should provide incentives to encourage more regional cooperation. For those responding positively, the survey contained an open ended question asking specifically what types of incentives the state could provide that would encourage towns to participate in more regional activities. Sixty-six of the chief elected officials provided written comments on how to encourage towns to engage in more regional activities. The suggestions included:

- give grants to prepare conservation and development plans;
- allow revenue sharing (i.e., sales tax revenue should be dedicated to regional activities);
- provide start-up or seed money;
- present information and explain how centralization would work, while allowing towns to maintain their identity and autonomy;
- provide more money to RPOs to lead/promote efforts;
- provide monetary incentives to towns participating in regional activities; and
- encourage regional education.

A few chief elected officials either did not believe the state should provide funding, noting that it would eventually lead to unfunded mandates, or they wanted funding to bypass the RPO and go directly to the town.

Cooperative purchasing. Municipal chief elected officials also were surveyed on whether they used existing purchasing agreements and contracts negotiated by other entities. Of the 88 responses received, 92 percent stated that they used purchase agreements and contracts negotiated by the state of Connecticut; 60 percent used those offered by organizations such as the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities or the Capitol Region Education Council; 50 percent used those offered by their own RPO; 36 percent had direct agreements with one or more towns; and 26 percent used programs operated by other RPOs.

Chief elected officials were also asked about participating in several specific purchasing or service delivery opportunities in the future. Almost all of the 88 respondents (92 percent) would be interested in participating in cooperative purchasing agreements in the future, while 83 percent were interested in buying equipment with other towns to share. The listed area with the least interest shown, although still a majority, was in sharing the use and expenses of recreational facilities located in another town -- only 60 percent of respondents were interested.

Chapter Seven

Findings and Recommendations

Many efforts aimed at increased regionalism are currently taking place at the state agency level as well as jointly among state government, regional entities, and local governments. The program review committee believes that building on these efforts will allow participation in such activities to still be voluntary and recommends state dollars be targeted to encourage more of these region-wide initiatives to occur. In this way, the state can promote a regional perspective that contributes to the long-term development of Connecticut.

The overall goal of the recommendations contained in this chapter is to encourage towns to continue to address issues through Regional Planning Organizations to foster the growth and development of regional activities in the state. The committee's findings and recommendations are focused on three broad areas:

- the role, structure, and boundaries of Regional Planning Organizations;
- the relationship of the Office of Policy and Management to the continued growth of regionalism in Connecticut; and
- the use of state funding as a means of increasing regional activities.

Role of Regional Planning Organizations

The need to address certain public policy issues on a regional versus an individual town basis has been recognized in Connecticut since the 1940s when the state legislature authorized the creation of regional planning agencies. Since the first organized effort in 1948 by a few towns in South Central Connecticut, which established the South Central Regional Planning Authority, every single town in Connecticut, except one, has joined a Regional Planning Organization.

The workload of each Regional Planning Organization is driven by three factors:

- state mandates set out in statute;
- federal government requirements related to grants, especially transportation grants; and
- individual agenda items chosen by member towns.

The primary statutory responsibilities of all three types of Regional Planning Organizations are the same. The key recurring duty involves review and comment tasks in response to actions undertaken by local towns or developers related to zoning and subdivision changes. In operation, the extent of this responsibility varies considerably among RPOs, depending on the size and characteristics of the region, and it is driven by activity at the municipal level. Another key statutory requirement -- preparation of a Regional Development Plan -- is mandated only once every 10 years.

Federal transportation money is an important source of revenue for the 11 RPOs that have been designated Metropolitan Planning Organizations. Consequently, *some of the most commonly performed tasks carried out by RPO staff are the ones needed to meet the ongoing requirements of such federal grants.* Major activities include development of a Transportation Improvement Program and preparation of a Regional Transportation Plan.

With the exception of transportation planning, which already has a regional focus, and a few state-mandated responsibilities related to conservation and development planning, most of the activities performed by the RPOs are at the direction of their member towns. As detailed in Chapter Three, all of the RPOs handle a wide variety of activities for the member towns within their regions. However, the scope of those tasks is dependent on financial and staffing resources, which vary greatly among the RPOs.

Growth in Regionalism

Since 1999, at least a half dozen studies have examined Connecticut's social, physical, and economic conditions and made recommendations that call for a broader regional role, if Connecticut is to avoid the risk of economic decline.²¹ The studies describe the impact that land use regulations have on the quality of life in Connecticut, and consequently, how this affects patterns of economic development, transportation, housing, and the environment. Most of the studies also cite the negative impact of local property taxes in Connecticut, which causes towns to compete against each other for new development in order to sustain services by increasing their grand list totals. Thus, the studies conclude that limiting sprawl, yet keeping Connecticut economically viable and a desirable place to live, requires certain issues to be addressed at a regional level.

Over the years, the objective of state legislation related to regionalism has been to encourage, rather than require, towns to jointly cooperate. Towns have opportunities to work formally through statutorily authorized Regional Planning Organizations or other regional entities, or they can use permissive statutory language that allows not only two or more municipalities to join together to accomplish certain tasks, but also allows RPOs to join together for the same purposes.

More and more frequently in recent years, growing numbers of towns in Connecticut are entering into joint efforts with groups of towns for an ever widening array of purposes. A report by the Connecticut Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations in June 2000 identified dozens of types of programs that involve cooperative arrangements involving multiple towns. The report listed approximately 1,000 inter-municipal joint ventures, including education arrangements. When general government services alone were counted, there were 436 specific programs in 30 different categories.²² Since then, additional programs have been started or expanded.

²¹ For example, see 1000 Friends of Connecticut, *Developing Connecticut's Economic Future*; *Report of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Property Tax Burdens and Smart Growth Incentives* (October, 2002); Michael Gallis & Associates, *Economic Vitality and Land Use* (2003) and *Connecticut's Strategic Economic Framework* (1999); and Ameregis, *Connecticut Metropatterns: A Regional Agenda for Community and Prosperity in Connecticut*, 2003.

²² Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, *Local Government Cooperative Ventures in Connecticut*, June 2000, pp. 1-5.

An examination of the ACIR report shows these efforts involve a variety of different approaches. Sometimes arrangements are headed by an RPO, other times by two or more towns, and still other times by an entirely different regional entity with different geographic boundaries than the RPOs.

Numerous studies since the 1950s have called for greater regional cooperation, but beyond conservation and development planning requirements, no major mandates limiting local government authority have been enacted. Rather, the approach that state policy leaders have taken over the years has been to promote the formation of Regional Planning Organizations. However, until recently, there has not been much state financial support for RPOs to address issues of a regional nature.

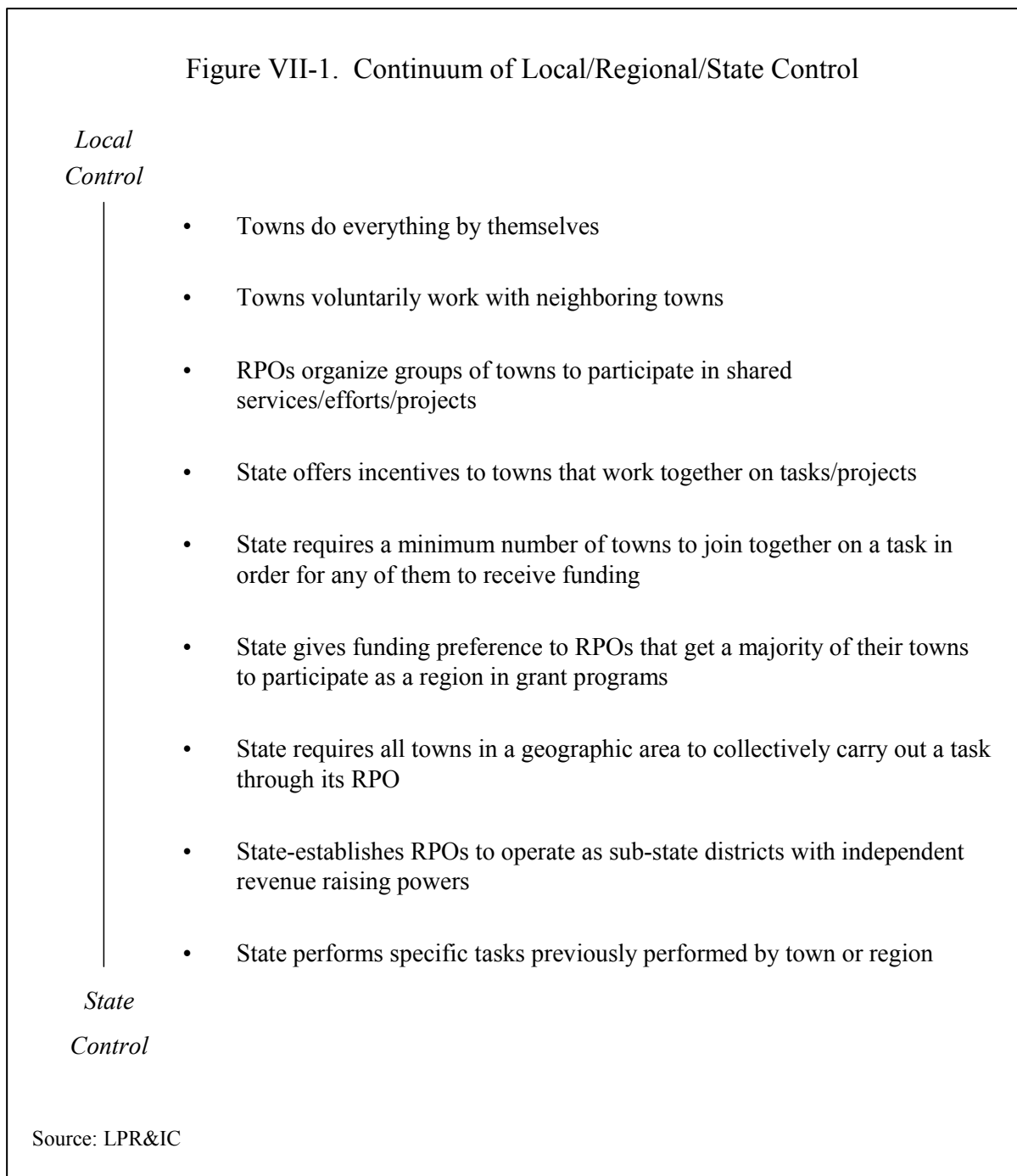
Because of the structure of local government in Connecticut, with 169 municipal governments, a strong preference for home rule, and an aversion to unfunded state mandates, the state legislature has never granted RPOs the authority to override local land use decisions or empowered RPOs to address specific issues regarding housing or economic development on a region-wide level. *Thus, a major challenge for state policy makers is to balance regional needs that facilitate the long-term development of the state, with the long-held preference of retaining control and decision-making at the local level of government.*

Many individuals knowledgeable about public budget trends maintain that as local budget pressures build to very high levels, towns will be forced to act cooperatively by sharing services, or else they will be forced to raise taxes, or they will need to reduce the level of services provided to their residents. While the committee agrees that more cooperative arrangements will likely occur as municipal fiscal pressures increase, it is important that support for regional cooperation continue to increase, whether it is on an ad hoc basis involving a small number of towns or on a broader region-wide basis.

Based on interviews with individuals at the state, regional, and local levels involved in regional efforts and an analysis of the results of the program review committee's survey of municipal chief elected officials, *there is no consensus on whether the state should build the capacity of RPOs so they can undertake state-mandated tasks on a region-wide basis.* In addition, there was no agreement on whether certain land use decisions should be shifted away from municipalities to regional or state government. Most of those interviewed acknowledged that regional planning is important, and increasing collaboration among towns for the provision of certain services would be more cost efficient. However, almost all local officials opposed the idea of the state imposing mandates that would require specific functions and activities to be regionalized.

Instead, most local officials surveyed, as well as the RPO executive directors interviewed, believe the decision to identify services or functions to share with neighboring towns or a broader region should rest with local elected officials. In addition, most also said the state should provide greater incentives (such as the Regional Performance Incentive Program adopted last session) to encourage greater regional cooperation, but they cautioned against a "top-down" approach to regionalism.

Thus, the philosophical debate remains almost unchanged over the last 60 years – how much authority should regional entities in Connecticut be given. Figure VII-1 shows a continuum of decision-making authority that ranges from strong local control to a state-recognized regional entity to strong state control.



At the top of the figure, there are no cooperative arrangements among towns; each town does everything on its own. The next stage involves voluntary efforts among a small number of neighboring towns, but there are no formal models to follow or outside financial incentives

provided. As activities expand, successful projects get copied, and an entity such as a Regional Planning Organization can serve as the coordinator or administrator of the program.

As the continuum moves toward what is often described as a “top down” approach to regionalism, the state takes a more active role, ranging from offering incentives to towns for voluntary cooperation to providing funding only when specific results are achieved. At the next stage, RPOs could operate as sub-state districts with independent revenue raising powers. Other single-purpose regional entities could be consolidated into the strengthened RPOs, along with authority over certain land use decisions as well as administration and/or operation of certain region-wide functions. At the extreme, the state performs the desired tasks itself.

The trend in recent years has been to move away from towns going it entirely alone. Most towns in Connecticut have embraced the use of regional entities for some purposes, but there is less support for state-imposed joint efforts. At the same time, in Connecticut, the state does take on the role played by county and other regional entities in other states to the extent that state government operates jails, distributes assistance payments to needy families, and provides other types of social services.

There are several obstacles to the establishment of stronger Regional Planning Organizations in Connecticut. The most significant barrier is ideological. Some individuals believe that local government is more responsive and service is of a higher quality at the local level, while others think planning and delivering services in 169 towns in Connecticut is costly, inefficient, and leads to poor land use decisions that encourage sprawl.

As mentioned previously, RPOs are currently authorized by the state, but must be established by local legislative bodies. To move to a stronger regional system, the committee believes that the state would need to:

- re-establish RPOs as state-created entities so that they are not dependent on approval of local legislative bodies for their existence and funding;
- mandate they be given region-wide authority for certain land use decisions and any other regional functions, including those currently performed by state agencies, other single-purpose regional entities, and local governments; and
- grant them independent taxing authority in order to generate revenue, or at least give them a set percentage of other tax revenues collected by state or local government.

Given that there appears to be no consensus for moving in this direction, the committee believes the current evolution of regional activity should be encouraged to continue. In order to promote additional efforts at a faster pace, the program review committee is proposing recommendations to adjust the existing RPO system.

Structure of Regional Planning Organizations

Today, three types of Regional Planning Organizations are authorized to operate in Connecticut -- Regional Councils of Governments, Regional Councils of Elected Officials, and

Regional Planning Agencies. As detailed in Chapter Two, the organizational structure of these entities has evolved since the 1940s, but the current distribution of seven RCOGs, three RCEOs, and five RPAs has existed since 2002.

With respect to the RPO boards of directors, depending on the type of RPO structure adopted in a given region, the size, appointing authority, and type of appointees to the board will differ. Table VII-1 summarizes the statutory provisions regarding the composition for the three types of RPOs.

Table VII-1. Composition of RPO Boards		
	<i>Regional Planning Agency</i>	<i>Regional Council of Elected Officials OR Regional Council of Governments</i>
Representation	2 per member town + 1 per 50,000 people (or fraction over 25,000)	1 per member town (except Hartford gets 4 seats, based on Special Act)
Selection of representatives	if planning commission exists, it appoints at least one representative; other representative(s) elected/appointed as town legislative body chooses	chief elected official of each member town; if none, representative selected by town's legislative body
Alternates	not mentioned	bylaws can provide for alternate representative
Source of data: Connecticut General Statutes		

As indicated in the table, the size of a RPA board is based on the populations of the towns located within its boundaries, and it includes representatives of the planning bodies within those towns. The RCEO and RCOG board memberships generally allow only one seat per member town, and that representative is the chief elected official. As noted, bylaws can be adopted to allow alternates to attend meetings in place of the chief elected official.

The number of board members per existing RPO ranges from four to 32, with a median of 15. With the exception of the Capitol Region Council of Governments, where the city of Hartford gets three extra seats under Special Act 73-79, the number of board members equals the number of towns for the RCEOs and RCOGs. Table VII-2 indicates the size of the board for each of the five RPAs, which by statute apportion seats based on individual town populations.

Table VII-2. Size of Boards of Directors of RPAs in Connecticut			
<i>Name of RPA</i>	<i>Towns</i>	<i>No. of Board Members</i>	<i>Total Population of Region</i>
Central Conn.	7	17	232,460
Conn. River Estuary	9	18	62,184
Greater Bridgeport	6	18	310,739
Midstate	8	17	109,761
South Western	8	22	362,193
Sources of data: Documents from individual RPAs			

Currently, there are two inter-related issues regarding the composition of RPOs in Connecticut. They concern the qualifications of the people who sit on the boards of directors and whether three different types of regional planning organizations should continue to exist.

Board composition. The discussion about board membership is focused on two different types of potential representatives to the boards of directors. A number of people support a requirement that all RPO boards have at least some members who have formal credentials (i.e., education and experience) in the field of planning. This view is based on the belief that such individuals can provide information and insight during discussions about the many land use and other planning responsibilities that are statutorily assigned or voluntarily undertaken by RPOs. Appointees with planning expertise complement and could potentially supplement the work of the RPO staff.

At the same time, other people believe it is vital that the chief elected official of each member town serve on the board of the RPO. The chief elected officials are regarded as being able to discuss development issues from multiple perspectives reflecting the many different interests of the taxpayers in their respective towns, and they are accountable to the public. Perhaps more importantly, the chief elected officials generally also have the authority needed to commit their towns to participate, financially or otherwise, in regional efforts.

The program review committee survey about regional planning sent to municipal chief elected officials asked them about these two types of representatives. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of 86 respondents agreed at least one individual serving on a RPO board should have planning experience, while 55 percent of 89 respondents agreed that chief elected officials should be required to serve on the RPO board in their area.

As previously noted, RPAs have a minimum of two representatives per town, and state statutes currently require one of the town representatives on the board of a RPA to be appointed by the local planning commission. The appointee is not required to be a planner or a member of that commission, but in practice, it appears many are. The legislative body of the town decides how the other RPA representatives will be selected, but there are likewise no work experience or education requirements. In practice, a few towns do have their chief elected official serve on the board, but many appointees are town employees, while others are citizens who are retired or work in the private sector.

Towns that belong to RCEOs and RCOGs, on the other hand, only have a single representative -- the chief elected official. Those individuals may or may not have expertise in the planning field. Some are allowed under the bylaws of the organization to designate an alternate to attend meetings in their place, but in many cases this must be the town manager or another member of the board of selectmen.

A RCEO may co-exist with a RPA within the same state-defined planning region. In such cases, the RPA continues to perform the planning duties outlined in Chapter 127 of the statutes, while the RCEO focuses on broader issues. Currently, two RPAs have formed a joint RCEO that meets monthly. The joint RCEO is not included in the count of 15 RPOs in the state because it basically serves as an information sharing body rather than a decision-making or implementation entity. The three RCEOs counted as part of the 15 RPOs all perform the

statutory functions of RPAs because such entities do not operate in their regions. In those cases, the RCEOs generally have access to planning expertise through the RCEO staff. (In addition, one has established a Regional Planning Commission.)

A mechanism available to RCOGs to obtain input from a planner's perspective is a Regional Planning Commission. When RCOGs were originally authorized under state law in 1971, each had to establish a Regional Planning Commission that handled all planning duties and responsibilities on behalf of the council. Towns had the same amount of representation on the planning commission as on the council. The requirement for a Regional Planning Commission was repealed in 2000, and the commissions became optional, advisory bodies. Today, six of the seven RCOGs still have Regional Planning Commissions, although the extent to which the commissions are used varies.

Types of RPOs. With respect to the organizational structure of the RPOs, the legislature has expanded the available choices over the years. When logical planning regions were defined by the state in the 1950s, the only organizational type available was the RPA model, which focused on land use planning functions.

The introduction of the RCEO model in 1965 provided any two or more towns in a region with an option for an organization that would be able to address a broader array of issues and would be governed by the chief elected officials from the member towns. Regions could also have a RPA. Authorization to create RCOGs in 1971 built upon the RCEO model, but to ensure greater participation required that 60 percent of the eligible towns join. In addition, creation of a RCOG within a region resulted in the subsequent dissolution of any existing RPA and/or RCEO and a prohibition on a new RPA and/or RCEO as long as a RCOG exists.

When three types of RPOs first became available, the differences between them were clearer with respect to their responsibilities and the amount of local municipal support needed to establish the particular entity. Over the years, the statutory language describing each entity has been amended multiple times, giving each the same general duties and authority. *Today, there are few differences between a RCEO and a RCOG, while the primary difference between those two types of structures and a RPA is who sits on the board of directors (as discussed above).*

Increasingly people who interact with multiple RPOs have noted the difficulty distinguishing between the three types of organizations. Questions have been raised as to whether one type of structure should be required for all RPOs in Connecticut. This would simplify the existing system by applying a single name and terminology to all of the elements and activities of the RPOs.

The specific model most frequently supported is the RCOG. It is cited for the historically successful work of the largest of the existing RCOGs, the direct involvement of municipal chief elected officials, and the fact that the RCOG model is the one currently used in the largest number of state-defined planning regions in the state. The seven existing RCOGs cover about half of the state's towns (57 percent), population (52 percent), and square mileage (58 percent). Furthermore, the three largest RPOs in the state, in terms of the number of towns belonging to the RPO and the total geographic area, are RCOGs.

In considering changes to the current RPO structure, however, it is worthwhile to examine the history of the state's efforts to promote local government participation through regional organizations. From the time the legislature first adopted formal statutory language regarding Regional Planning Organizations in the 1940s, the state has never mandated that towns become members of RPOs. Instead, over the decades, as the issues facing local governments increased and the services that town residents wanted came with ever higher price tags, more and more towns chose to participate in RPOs as a mechanism to help address their individual needs.

One RPO was established in the 1940s, and a second in the 1950s. A dozen RPOs were created in the 1960s, and the last of the current 15 RPOs was established in 1972.

In 1965 and 1971, when the state devised the new types of RPOs, it did not require existing RPOs to change. The new models were simply options that offered towns within a given region a approach more directly involving chief elected officials in the process. The fact that nine RPOs changed from the RPA structure to the RCEO or RCOG structure and another RPO was created as a RCEO could be considered an endorsement of those models, but the changes occurred slowly. Four RPOs made the change in the 1970s, three in the 1980s, and one each in the 1990s and 2000. In recent years, however, two other RPAs considered changing to a RCEO or RCOG, but decided not to.

Connecticut citizens are innovators in many ways, but changes in governmental structure and operations tend to occur slowly. Given the ability of all three types of RPOs to perform the same functions, the program review committee believes that forcing a change to a single structural model would be counterproductive. It also could destroy the institutional goodwill that the RPOs have created within their respective areas. Noting that a number of towns studied and rejected the idea of changing their RPO design only a few years ago, the program review committee is concerned that eliminating choices could dampen the willingness of towns to participate in regional activities. Instead of promoting more regionalism, towns might withdraw from formal participation in a RPO.

The program review committee believes the fact that all but one town in the state belongs to a Regional Planning Organization, but groups of neighboring towns have chosen to establish different models, demonstrates the value of offering options. **Therefore, the program review committee recommends:**

All three types of Regional Planning Organizations currently allowed under Connecticut law -- Regional Planning Agencies, Regional Councils of Elected Officials, and Regional Councils of Governments -- should continue to be authorized.

To the extent that state officials believe one particular RPO structural model is preferable to the other models for some or all program purposes, the state can offer more technical or financial support to towns using that particular model. A recent example of this is the new Regional Performance Incentive Program, authorized under Public Act 07-239. The law specifies that proposals submitted by RCOGs that include participation by 50 percent or more of their member towns will be given priority for the funding available.

The committee does believe several modifications to the current statutory requirements for RPOs should be made. The next two recommendations are aimed at clarifying terminology and explicitly confirming powers and duties. A third recommendation seeks to enhance communication with local chief elected officials.

As previously discussed, the three types of RPOs operating in Connecticut share the same major responsibilities, and many people have difficulty keeping track of the specific type of RPO employed in each region. Increasingly, informal references intended to include all three models will use the more generic reference of Regional Planning Organization. Until 2007, this term did not appear in any statutory language. In order to clarify what the term RPO means and to facilitate the use of the term on a more formal basis, the **program review committee recommends:**

Chapter 50, Part IV, of the Connecticut General Statutes shall be amended to add a definition of the term “Regional Planning Organization.” The definition shall specify that the term collectively includes Regional Planning Agencies, Regional Councils of Elected Officials, and Regional Councils of Governments established under the provisions of Chapters 50 and 127 of the statutes.

RCOGs are statutorily authorized to do all of the things that RCEOs and RPAs do, as well as a few other things (such as own property for use as their administrative offices). RCEOs are statutorily authorized to exercise all the powers of a RPA, if there is no RPA in the region, but there is no cross reference to the powers of a RCOG. To clarify that RCEOs have the same authority as Regional Councils of Governments, **the program review committee recommends:**

C.G.S. Sec. 4-124h shall be amended to specify that a legally established Regional Council of Elected Officials can exercise all of the powers of a Regional Council of Governments as defined in Chapter 50 of the statutes.

For the present time, the committee believes access to relevant planning information is available to board members of all three types of RPOs. Although the information is provided to different degrees and in different formats, via the mechanisms described above, in all cases staff of each organization is available to provide expertise in this area.

The absence of direct involvement by municipal chief elected officials in the state-defined planning regions that use the RPA model could be more problematic. The committee believes the person empowered by the citizens of each member town to act on behalf of that town needs to be kept informed and consulted when solutions to complex, long-term, and potentially costly regional issues are being decided. Under the arrangements currently in place in the five existing RPAs, some of the mechanisms for communicating with local chief elected officials are more structured than others. As efforts to increase regional activities expand, with the possibility that RPOs might be given additional responsibilities in the future, it will be even more important to ensure that communication with all local chief elected officials occurs.

The program review committee recommends:

Regional Planning Agencies shall be required to establish a mechanism for meeting with the chief elected officials of their member towns at least quarterly to communicate information about region-wide issues. The mechanism shall be established by January 1, 2009.

Under the proposed recommendation, Regional Planning Agencies would have flexibility to make use of existing mechanisms that meet the proposed requirement or set up a new structure. In either case, the chief elected officials would have to meet at least four times a year. Examples of acceptable mechanisms include:

- a complementary Regional Council of Elected Officials established by all of the member towns of the Regional Planning Agency for that area alone or in conjunction with another RPA;
- a subcommittee of the board of the Metropolitan Planning Organization that operates in the region where the RPA is located, if the chief elected officials of all member towns serve on the subcommittee; or
- a new committee or subcommittee of the Regional Planning Agency that is composed of the chief elected officials of all member towns and is charged with receiving information and providing guidance to the board of directors about regional cooperative efforts.

Geographic Boundaries

The existing 15 RPOs vary considerably in terms of their physical characteristics. Table VII-3 summarizes the ranges of four characteristics that measure the size of the regions. (See Table III-3 in Chapter Three for the specific numbers for each RPO.) As indicated, two RPOs are the smallest in two categories each, while one RPO is the largest in three categories.

Table VII-3. Physical Characteristics of 15 Existing Regional Planning Organizations					
<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Smallest RPO</i>	<i>Largest RPO</i>
Total No. of Towns	4	29	10	Valley	Capitol
Total Population	23,374	739,399	221,481	Northwestern	Capitol
Total Square Miles	58	762	327	Valley	Capitol
Density (people/sq. miles)	271	2,128	661	Northwestern	Greater Bridgeport
Source of data: Connecticut Register and Manual					

Connecticut is divided up on a regional basis in many different ways. Some of the designations are state-driven, and others are determined by the towns that choose to join a particular activity. State-defined configurations frequently cover all 169 towns, and the total number of regions tends to be smaller than the number established through local initiatives. Conversely, when local towns voluntarily create regional programs, the number of participants often evolves over time, starting with a few towns, and then expanding to larger numbers if the initial effort is successful.

While state agencies and the legislature have made efforts in recent years to align regions for related programs, the results have been mixed. In 1993, in response to Special Act 92-22, OPM identified boundaries for six uniform regional service delivery areas to be used by the state's four health and human services agencies. In 2005, one task of the new Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security was development of regional boundaries for planning and operational purposes. DEMHS sought to match its lines with those of regions that were already established such as the RPOs. In the end, however, several towns were grouped with different towns, based on police and fire mutual aid agreements.

The 2002 ACIR report on regional activities included data about the number of voluntary inter-municipal cooperative programs that each town in the state participated in at that time. The report indicated the smallest number of general town and education programs combined was 33, and the largest number was 94. The number of non-education programs alone per town ranged from 26 to 71.²³ (See Appendix E for a map summarizing the data that were in the ACIR report.)

The complexity and extent to which individual towns have to deal with multiple regions is illustrated by the experience of one RPO. The Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency has identified at least 20 different purposes for which its member towns are assigned to specific "regions," "committees," or "areas." In four cases, the boundaries are the same seven towns that comprise the RPO. In other cases, the seven towns are grouped with other towns to form a larger region. In at least eight cases, the seven RPO towns are split among multiple regions. This means the chief elected officials must interact with different groups of colleagues for those purposes, and RPO staff must attend multiple meetings on the same topic, if they want to represent the interests of their region on that topic.

Determining the exact number of geographic regions to establish for a particular program or to accomplish a specific function is not easy. The ultimate goal of the effort is the creation of an area that can support but not overwhelm the organization that will carry out the desired purpose within the specified regions. In order for that entity to be viable, members of the board must feel that their input receives equal consideration, and the entity also must have sufficient resources.

In the 1950s, the Connecticut Development Commission examined a number of factors before it defined the boundaries that eventually became the current 15 RPOs. The process used by CDC was summarized in Chapter One. Major characteristics that CDC looked at included:

- newspaper circulation patterns;
- commuting patterns of manufacturing workers;
- telephone service zones;
- traffic flow patterns; and
- growth trends in urban centers and their surrounding areas.

Since the original designation of logical planning regions, changes in the economy of Connecticut, housing patterns, environmental concerns, and technology in general have occurred

²³ ACIR, *Ibid.*, pp A-1 – A-3.

and are continuing to occur. This means factors such as newspaper circulation and telephone service are less helpful, while the commuting patterns of a wider range of workers and the location of viable urban centers are more important. Environmental elements such as wetlands, sewer capacity, and aquifer protection are also relevant. Another factor that should be considered is local perceptions of social and historic ties.

Under C.G.S. Sec. 16a-4a, the Office of Policy and Management has the authority to designate or redesignate logical planning regions within the state. Municipal chief elected officials who responded to the program review committee survey overwhelmingly supported periodic re-examination of the planning regions. Ninety-three percent of 89 respondents agreed the boundaries of the existing areas, originally developed in the 1950s and 1960s, should be re-evaluated periodically.

Given these factors, the program review committee believes OPM should be required to reexamine the boundaries of the state's planning regions periodically. Specifically, **the program review committee recommends:**

At least every 20 years, the Office of Policy and Management shall conduct an analysis of the boundaries of the state-defined logical planning areas in Connecticut and adopt new boundaries, if appropriate, based on that analysis. As part of its review, OPM shall develop criteria that will examine the influence of urban centers on neighboring towns in the context of current trends related to economic development and the environment, including characteristics such as housing patterns, employment levels, commuting patterns for the most widely held job classifications in the state, traffic patterns on major roadways, local perceptions of social and historic ties, and environmental considerations. OPM shall also include a measure that takes into consideration the size of the proposed regions (e.g., the number of towns, total population, and/or total square mileage), with the goal of establishing a minimum size for logical planning areas.

The first analysis of the regions under this new system should be completed by October 1, 2009, with any revision of boundaries taking effect by July 1, 2010.

The program review committee believes the analysis by OPM should build on the structures and relationships already in place among the existing RPOs, taking into consideration how the needs and interests of the citizens of Connecticut may have changed since the existing regions were originally defined. As with the current RPO system, towns would continue to have the option of joining the planning organization operating within their designated area, although failing to maintain membership in a reconfigured RPO would mean a town would lose access to the benefits of belonging to a RPO. Based on the increased level of support towns have been showing for regional projects, the committee is optimistic that towns will continue to participate in RPOs, even if the existing boundaries are revised.

The proposal of a review every 20 years is intended to ensure a periodic re-examination of regional activities and economic development trends within the state, while providing a degree

of stability to the ongoing operation of RPOs. Much of the planning work of the RPOs involves multi-year time periods, and the RPOs need consistent boundaries to make long-range projections and measure results. A 20-year review period should meet both of the intended purposes.

The portion of the recommendation concerning the identification of a minimum size for a logical planning region is intended to reflect the results of other planning-related efforts in recent years that produced state-based maps with smaller numbers of regions. A specific number of regions is not proposed in order to allow the results of the recommended analysis to guide the outcome.

Role of the Office of Policy and Management

The Office of Policy and Management, among its many duties, is responsible for the preparation of the State Plan of Conservation and Development and providing support to the Regional Planning Organizations. Its responsibilities related to both of these functions have grown over the years. As discussed in Chapter Two, significant responsibilities were added in 2006 and 2007, when state government leaders put forth several key policy initiatives to coordinate responsible growth policies across state agencies and among the state, the Regional Planning Organizations, and local government.

State conservation and development planning. The State Plan of Conservation and Development is statutorily required under Chapter 297. The plan serves as a statement of the development, resource management, and public investment policies of the state. The most recent State C&D Plan, effective from 2005 to 2010, was adopted by the legislature and signed into law under Public Act 05-205. As discussed in Chapter Five, it contains two components – the plan text and the Locational Guide Map, which is a physical representation of the conservation and development policies encouraged by the state. The map contains four development and four conservation areas, which are assigned a relative priority value.

The 2005 State C&D Plan departed from the format of previous plans by introducing six Growth Management Principles and associated policy recommendations in order to better integrate state planning functions across state agencies. Table VII-4 lists the six principles, the number of policies contained in the plan text assigned for each growth management principle, and the number of recommendations to implement the policies within each principle. Altogether there are 46 policies and 353 recommendations in the plan text.

The committee believes the shift to integrate conservation and development planning by using the six growth management principles is beneficial because it acknowledges that land use planning affects other policy areas. However, the policy goals contained in the plan text should be prioritized, and estimates regarding funding levels needed to implement a particular policy should be provided. This will help the Interagency Steering Council focus its efforts and make the plan more useful as a blueprint on ways to target state dollars.

Table VII-4. State Plan of Conservation and Development, 2005 - 2010		
Growth Management Principle	Number of Policies	Number of Recommendations to Implement Policies
1) Redevelop and Revitalize Regional Centers and Areas with Existing or Currently Planned Physical Infrastructure	8	79
2) Expand Housing Opportunities and Design Choices to Accommodate a Variety of Household Types and Needs	1	21
3) Concentrate Development Around Transportation Nodes and Along Major Transportation Corridors to Support the Viability of Transportation Options	4	54
4) Conserve and Restore the Natural Environment, Cultural and Historical Resources, and Traditional Rural Lands	17	100
5) Protect and Ensure the Integrity of Environmental Assets Critical to Public Health and Safety	16	90
6) Promote Integrated Planning Across all Levels of Government to Address Issues on a Statewide, Regional and Local Basis	0	9
Total	46	353
Source of data: OPM, <i>Conservation and Development - Policies Plan for Connecticut: 2005 - 2010</i>		

The program review committee recommends:

In preparing the 2010 revision of the State Plan of Conservation and Development, the Office of Policy and Management shall:

- **for each policy contained in the plan:**
 - **assign a priority to it;**
 - **provide an estimate of the level of funding needed to implement it and identify the potential source(s) of funding;**
 - **set time-frame(s) for implementation; and**
 - **identify the entity or entities responsible for implementation**
- **for each of the six growth management principles, include a minimum of three benchmarks, one of which shall be financial, to measure progress towards implementation of the plan.**

The committee believes prioritizing the policies and accompanying recommendations provides the necessary link between planning and funding decisions. Furthermore, it is important to know the extent to which progress has been made in implementing the policies in

the plan. Given that 81 percent of the chief elected officials responding to the committee's survey disagreed that the State C&D Plan was used to guide development in their town, relating the goals in the plan to state funding will make it a more dynamic document.

OPM review of regional plans of development. *Although regional plans of development are purely advisory, the plans should be viewed as key documents that link together towns with common interests, while supporting the overall goals of the State C&D Plan.* Since 2005, RPOs must submit proposed Regional Plans of Development to the secretary of OPM for findings, in the form of comments and recommendations, before the RPO holds a public hearing on the regional plan and adopts it. The findings by OPM must include a review of the plan to determine if the proposed plan is "not inconsistent" with the State C&D Plan and the State Economic Strategic Plan (which is not due until July 2009). After a RPO adopts a regional plan, if there are still any inconsistencies with the State Plan of Conservation and Development, the RPO must notify OPM of those inconsistencies and the reasons for them.

Until recently, although the law required each RPO to adopt a plan of development, it set no time frame for doing so. In 2005 the legislature began requiring plans of development to be updated at least once every 10 years, and an initial revision had to begin no more than three years after July 1, 2005. As of November 19, 2007, more than half of the RPOs had submitted updated plans, and OPM has found none to be inconsistent with the state plan.

At the present time:

- *there is no standard format for RPOs to follow when developing their Regional Plans of Development;*
- *there are no formal criteria for review of a regional plan by OPM to determine if it is inconsistent with the state plan; and*
- *there is no requirement for an implementation section, so OPM cannot measure progress made toward meeting regional goals.*

To facilitate the development of future regional plans, the committee believes there should be clearer guidance regarding how those plans will be evaluated. Therefore, **the program review committee recommends:**

The Office of Policy and Management shall develop criteria for the uniform review of Regional Plans of Development submitted to it in order to determine whether they are consistent with the State Plan of Conservation and Development.

The program review committee is also recommending a technical change to the name of the regional plan. State statutes refer to the State Conservation and Development Plan and Municipal Conservation and Development Plans, but at the regional level, the plan is called the Regional Plan of Development. For consistency, **the program review committee recommends:**

The name of the Regional Plan of Development shall be changed to the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development.

Targeting state investments. *Targeting state dollars, through infrastructure investments and open space policies, is an important mechanism that the state can use to control growth at the local level.* Since 1983, certain state infrastructure investments that exceed \$100,000 (raised to \$200,000 in 2007) are required to be consistent with the State C&D Plan. State law requires state agency actions *be consistent* with the plan for certain federal- or state-funded developments including:

- acquisition of real property;
- development or improvement of real property;
- acquisition of public transportation equipment or facilities;
- acquisition, development, or improvement of public transportation equipment or facilities; and
- the third phase of UConn 2000.

In each of those cases, state law requires a state agency to request, and OPM to provide, an advisory statement commenting on whether the agency's actions conform to the plan. The secretary of OPM must submit that advisory statement to the State Bond Commission when an item is placed on the agenda, and the commission must consider the statement prior to allocating any bond funds. In practice, items are rarely placed on the agenda if the advisory statement is negative. Beyond this, the state plan is largely an advisory document, with state law requiring certain state agency plans only *consider* the State C&D Plan.

In Connecticut, land use decisions are made at the local level. Recently, legislative and executive branch strategies have begun to focus on linking state investment decisions with implementation of responsible growth principles at the local level. Specific strategies include:

- establishing an Interagency Steering Council (described previously) under Executive Order No. 15 and charging it with coordinating policy development and capital planning;
- establishing a 19-member Responsible Growth Task Force (also noted above) under P.A. 07-239, which includes all Interagency Steering Council members, and is charged with identifying responsible growth criteria to help guide the state's future investment decisions;
- making municipalities ineligible for discretionary state funding if a municipality has not updated its conservation and development plan within a 10-year period, unless specifically waived by the OPM secretary;
- requiring the state Economic Strategic Plan that is to be developed on or before July 1, 2009, to be consistent with the text and Locational Guide Map of the State C&D Plan; and
- requiring the OPM secretary to develop and submit recommendations for setting and revising boundaries for priority funding areas in order to target state investment to specific areas in conjunction with the 2010 – 2015 State Plan of Conservation and Development, both of which are subject to legislative approval. Once the boundaries are effective, each state agency will

be required to review its regulations and modify them to carry out coordinated management of growth-related projects in priority funding areas.

State bonding. Public Act 07-7 (June Special Session) created a new Responsible Growth Incentive Fund with \$15 million in bond money -- \$5 million in FY 08 and \$10 million in FY 09 – authorized for disbursement. For FY 09, half of the money is to be used for grants of \$250,000 to \$1 million each to implement transit-oriented plans in designated pilot program areas. In order to be eligible for a grant, participating municipalities must have completed a memorandum of understanding involving one or more Regional Planning Organizations.

The act also provides bond funds for RPOs to use for geospatial information systems data collection and mapping (up to \$400,000), and water pollution control projects (up to \$1,000,000). An additional \$500,000 in bond funds was targeted to municipalities to prepare and revise their Municipal Plans of Conservation and Development.

Regional Review of Projects

Several statutes concerning local entities with land use responsibilities also contain mandates involving Regional Planning Organizations. Two key provisions require written notification to the RPO in the state-defined region where a town is located whenever:

- a municipal zoning commission is considering a proposal to establish or change a zone or a regulation affecting the use of a zone within 500 feet of the boundary of another municipality within the RPO area; and
- a municipal planning commission is considering a plan for a subdivision of land and the area abuts or includes land in two or more municipalities.

In the first case, the RPO is required to study the proposal and report its findings and recommendations to the municipal zoning commission. Reports by the RPO can address potential negative inter-municipal and environmental impacts created by the proposal. Inter-municipal concerns may include issues such as traffic, density, environmental impact, and the burden placed on the adjacent community. Regional concerns may include those objectives and goals supported in the Regional Plan of Development. The report is advisory, but it must be made part of the local public hearing record for the proposed change. In the second case, the RPO must submit its findings on the inter-municipal aspects of the proposed subdivision including street layout, storm drainage, and sewer and water service.

In both instances, failure to submit a report at or before the town's public hearing on the matter results in a presumption that the RPO does not disapprove of the proposal. Data provided to the committee on the number of such reviews conducted by RPOs in a three-year period indicated RPOs typically review a large number of zone use changes and to a lesser extent, changes involving subdivisions.

State statutes also require that RPOs be notified, and in some cases comment on, various other projects occurring within a region. These include certain economic development programs, hazardous waste facilities and burial of radioactive waste, solid waste management plans, water supply and water flow issues, and public utility projects.

Although legislation has been raised since 1979 that would allow RPOs to either comment on projects of regional significance or actually approve them, in neither case has such authority been granted. As recently as last session, SB 1215 proposed giving RCOGs the authority to establish a process for the review of projects of regional significance and required their approval in order for such a project to move forward. Projects of regional significance were defined as those meeting the threshold established for review by the State Traffic Commission.²⁴

One question on the PRI committee survey sent to municipal chief elected officials listed a number of functions that could be performed by RPOs and asked respondents whether they agreed or disagree that RPOs should perform those functions. A high percentage of the chief elected officials who responded agreed that RPOs should comment on proposed subdivisions that abut or include land in two or more towns (91 percent of 92 respondents) as well as review and comment on proposed zone use or zone use changes within 500 feet of another town boundary (89 percent) – the two areas where RPOs *already have* authority. The same number (92 percent of 91 chief elected officials) agreed that RPOs should review and comment on local zoning projects with regional significance.

In order to make regional planning relevant, the committee believes that RPOs should at least be allowed to comment on projects that would have a regional impact. It would provide a broader perspective on development that occurs in one town, but has an impact beyond that town's border, and such comments should discuss such projects in the context of the goals contained in the Regional Plan of Development. **Therefore, the program review committee recommends:**

Regional Planning Organizations shall be given the statutory authority to comment on “projects of regional significance” that will be located in one town but will impact other towns in the region, or that are located in a town in another region but the town is contiguous to the region. The criteria for comment shall include analysis of the project's compliance with the Regional Development Plan as well as other issues the Regional Planning Organizations believe are critical to the analysis. Notice shall be provided to a Regional Planning Organization not later than 30 days before the public hearing to be held by the town where the project will be located. The RPO shall study any such proposal and shall report its findings and recommendations to the zoning commission at or before the hearing. The report of the RPO shall be advisory, but it shall be made a part of the record of such hearing. If the RPO does not submit a report at or before the hearing, it shall be presumed that it does not disapprove of the project.

The Office of Policy and Management, in consultation with the Interagency Steering Council established by Executive Order No. 15, shall develop regulations that define the term “projects of regional significance” and the criteria that would initiate a review of such projects by a Regional Planning Organization. The criteria used to define “projects of regional significance”

²⁴ State Traffic Commission regulations require a certificate of operation for all developments of 100,000 square feet of floor area and/or 200 or more parking spaces that abut or adjoin a state highway or substantially affect state highway traffic.

shall address, but not be limited to, such factors as project location, type, (such as energy, transportation, major infrastructure, water, or open space), and scope (size).

Funding To Support Regional Initiatives

Regional planning organizations have no revenue-raising authority. They are dependent on federal, state, and local governments for funding. As noted in Chapter Four, RPOs receive dues from member towns, but for many of them, most of the funding they receive comes from federal transportation dollars. The state increased SGIA funding from \$640,000 to \$1 million in FY 08, the first increase in seven years, with the money shared by the 15 RPOs according to a statutory formula.

Since 2000, state law has allowed chief elected officials in two or more municipalities to share real and personal property tax revenue, subject to approval by their legislative bodies (C.G.S. Sec. 7-148bb). The agreement must be negotiated, with an opportunity for public participation, and adopted by resolution of each participating municipality's legislative body. It must contain all of the provisions on which the municipalities agree. These provisions can include: (1) which tax revenue will be shared, and (2) how it will be collected. The agreement must contain procedures for its amendment and termination and a municipality's withdrawal from it. To date no municipalities in Connecticut have entered into such agreements.

It seems highly unlikely that two or more municipalities will share property tax revenue without it being mandated by the state. In the past, legislation was proposed to give RPOs a separate revenue stream including bonding authority, a portion of the state sales tax collected in the region, or a portion of the property tax collected by towns in their regions. To date, however, no such legislation has been adopted.

Under Public Act 07-239, OPM must conduct two studies and submit recommendations to the planning and development and the finance, revenue, and bonding committees by July 1, 2009. The first concerns regional tax-based revenue sharing programs; the other examines regional asset districts operating in other states. Future discussions of these topics will be a valuable addition to the debate on how these types of programs could be structured to provide property tax relief.

One example of a successful revenue-sharing model operating in another area of the country is in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region where seven-counties share property tax revenue as a way to reduce the fiscal disparity between large cities and the surrounding suburbs. Since 1971, municipalities within the Twin Cities region have been contributing 40 percent of the growth in their commercial and industrial tax base to an areawide pool. This pool is then apportioned to each municipality based on its population and relative fiscal capacity.

In terms of a model for regional asset districts, the state of Pennsylvania allows Allegheny County to levy a 1 percent sales tax to support regional recreational and cultural attractions. The county must split the tax between itself and the regional asset district charged with supporting these attractions. It must use its share to reduce county property taxes. Another way that states have tried to ease the pressure on local property taxes bases is to allow

municipalities to levy sales and income taxes, a move that shifts some of the tax burden to nonresidents who work or shop in the municipality.

Regional Performance Incentive Program. There is general agreement that sharing services on a voluntary basis often is more efficient, and that efforts to expand the number and variety of cooperative services should be encouraged. Public Act 07-239 established a Regional Performance Incentive Program to be administered by OPM. A one-time appropriation of \$8.6 million was allocated for FY 08. It allows any RPO to submit a proposal for joint provision of a service or services that are currently provided by municipalities within the region of the RPO (or contiguous to the region), but not currently provided on a regional basis.

Proposals must include a resolution endorsing the proposal from the legislative body of each municipality participating in the project. In addition, each municipality must certify that there are no legal obstacles to providing services in the manner proposed, including but not limited to binding arbitration agreements. These two requirements have been identified by multiple people at the state, regional, and local level as obstacles in the current language establishing the program.

The deadline for submission of proposals was December 3, 2007. The Office of Policy and Management provided some aggregate data on the proposals it received. According to OPM:

- 11 of the 15 RPOs submitted proposals;
- 32 proposals were submitted amounting to \$11.5 million; and
- 129 towns are participating in one or more of the proposals.

The categories included proposals for regional efforts in public safety, economic development, information technology, animal control, and land use.

Although this initial program is a one-time event, the program review committee believes the idea behind it is a good one, and the program should continue, but with some modifications. Specifically, **the program review committee recommends:**

The Regional Performance Incentive Program shall:

- **be established as an ongoing program;**
- **include criteria to be developed by OPM for evaluating proposals;**
and
- **give a preference to proposals that encompass region-wide efforts.**

Based on the review of applications submitted in December 2007, the Office of Policy and Management should develop proposed substitute language for operation of the program in the future if necessary to overcome barriers identified as preventing projects of a regional nature from being established.

Towns that act regionally should be rewarded to encourage more regionalism. Because the program is new and one-time, OPM has not yet developed criteria to rank the proposals received. OPM could establish a point system to reward RPOs that submit proposals that provide for revenue sharing or other high priority project areas. Regions with the most points would get the most incentive revenues.

An Office of Legislative Research report examined other states that provide grants to two or more towns that share or consolidate municipal services.²⁵ The report looked at states in the Northeast and found at least four of those states -- Maine, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania -- provide grants to municipal and county governments to share services. The amounts allocated for the programs in FY 07 ranged from \$500,000 in Maine to more than \$25 million in New York. Some of the states target funds to encourage specific activities or services be shared, while others allow the use of funds for a broad array of purposes. In addition, in two of the four states, a local match of funds is required ranging from 10 percent in New Jersey to 50 percent in Maine. Appendix F contains a table comparing the four programs.

²⁵ Office of Legislative Research, 2007-R-0047, *Grants for Consolidating Municipal Services*, January 16, 2007.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A Mission Statements of the 15 Regional Planning Organizations in Connecticut	
<i>Region</i>	<i>Mission Statement</i>
CRCOG	expand the concept of voluntary cooperation and regional stewardship among member municipalities as the means to successfully respond to many of the region's pressing governmental and public challenges
CCRPA	provide a regional framework within which to plan and promote regional policies and programs to enhance the vitality, accessibility, and quality of life in our communities
CRERPA	plan for and promote voluntary cooperative approaches to changing land use and other issues affecting the character and the people of the region
COGCNV	serve as forum for chief elected officials to discuss issues of common concern and develop programs to address them on a regional level; operate as planning organization concerned with economic development, land use, water planning, and transportation needs of the region
GBRPA	serve as the responsible regional planning body for the metropolitan area; proactively shape a comprehensive vision for the region's future growth
HVCEO	make region a better place to live, do business, and visit through coordinated planning and cooperative approaches
LHCEO	provide a forum where officials can discuss issues of regional concern, identify the needs of the region, and prepare reports/plans that respond to those needs
MRPA	provide regional planning for eight municipalities in the northern portion of Middlesex County
NECCOG	provide a forum to meet, regionally, the goals of economic development and natural resources preservation; foster inter-town cooperation in areas extending municipal services, design, and development; and identify opportunities for better, cost-effective government services
NWCCOG	serve as regional forum for sharing ideas, resources, and costs
SCRCOG	enable cities and towns, through regional cooperation, to work together to accomplish projects they cannot do as efficiently or cost effectively by themselves, create sense of pride in the region by aspiring to the highest quality of life and economic wellbeing that can be achieved, and increase voluntary cooperation in the region to achieve productive results that benefit the region
SWRPA	preserve and improve the quality of life and economic vitality in southwestern Connecticut, focusing on issues of transportation, land use, the environment, housing, open space, and regional security
SCCOG	provide a basis for intergovernmental cooperation in dealing with a wide range of issues facing southeastern Connecticut
VCOG	solving regional problems, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the region's local governments as well as the quality of life
WINCOG	plan for the physical and economic future of the region and provide a forum for inter-municipal discussion and decision-making
Sources of data: documents from individual RPOs	

Appendix B. RPO Notification and Review Requirements						
C.G.S. Section	Subject	Referred From	Report to	Review (R) or Notify (N)	Review Period	Required Action
7-136e	Municipal application for establishment of foreign trade zone	Municipality	Municipality	R	90 days	Advisability of establishing zone
8-3b	1. proposed change in zone of any parcel within 500 feet of municipal boundary 2. Change in zoning regulations of any parcel within 500 feet of municipal boundary	Zoning Commission	Zoning Commission	R	35 days	Advisory review, study proposal and report findings and recommendations and it becomes part of the hearing record
8-23	Municipal plans of conservation and development	Planning Commission	Planning Commission	R	65 days	Advisory report with comments regarding plan consistency state, regional, and plans of other towns in the same RPO
8-26b	Proposed subdivision on municipal boundary	Planning Commission	Planning Commission	R	30 days	Advisory review, particularly as to intermunicipal aspects of proposed project
8-165	Preparation of overall economic development program by the Municipal Economic Development Commission or Regional Economic Development Commission	Municipal or Region Economic Development Commission	Municipal or Regional Economic Development Commission	R	n/a	Submit recommendations and comments
8-191	Proposed plan for a development project	Local Development Agency	Local Development Agency	R	35 days	Review to determine if plan is consistent with regional development plan.

Appendix B. RPO Notification and Review Requirements						
<i>C.G.S. Section</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Referred From</i>	<i>Report to</i>	<i>Review (R) or Notify (N)</i>	<i>Review Period</i>	<i>Required Action</i>
13b-31a	Guidelines for design and construction of roads and streets in residential subdivisions	DOT commissioner	n/a	N	n/a	May use standards in adoption of municipal subdivision regulations
16-32f	Gas company supply and demand forecast reports and conservation plans	Gas companies	n/a	N	n/a	
16-50l	Proposed application for certification of transmission line site	Public Utility	CT Siting Council	N	n/a	Public utility must show that Siting council RPO has received copy of application. No comment required
16-358	Underground gas facilities report	Gas company owning or operating underground gas facility	n/a	N	n/a	Receive copy
16a-28	Revisions to State Plan of Conservation and Development	OPM	n/a	n/a	n/a	Within five months after revised plan is published, OPM in conjunction with RPO, to hold public hearing
22a-102d	Revisions to Municipal Plan of Conservation and Development	Planning Commission	Planning Commission	R	90 day review	Review and suggest modifications
22a-118	Application to CT Siting Council for Certificate of Public Safety and Necessity for Hazardous waste facility	Applicant for certificate	Not applicable	N	n/a	Applicant must show proof of service of application to RPO

Appendix B. RPO Notification and Review Requirements						
<i>C.G.S. Section</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Referred From</i>	<i>Report to</i>	<i>Review (R) or Notify (N)</i>	<i>Review Period</i>	<i>Required Action</i>
22a-137	Application to bury radioactive waste	General Assembly: Environment Committee	General Assembly: Environment Committee	N	30 days	Committee must notify RPO 30 days before hearing and consider any RPO recommendations
25-33g	Assessment of water supply conditions and problems	Water Utility Coordinating Committee	Water Utility Coordinating Committee	R	n/a	Solicited for comments
25-68d	State agency applications to DEP for exemption from certification of activity affecting a floodplain	DEP commissioner	n/a	N	n/a	Notified of exemption approval
Public Act 07-70	The Commissioner of Public Works shall consult with the Department of Transportation, transit districts or regional planning agencies on the current and future status of railroad and motor bus routes prior to leasing, purchasing or contracting for the purchase of a state facility.	DPW commissioner	n/a	R	n/a	Consult
Source: Greater Bridgeport RPA.						

**Appendix C. Legislative Changes to Connecticut's
State Plan of Conservation and Development (State C&D Plan)**

<i>Public Act</i>	<i>Requirement</i>
	House Joint Resolution No. 40 directs executive branch to prepare State C&D Plan
	Executive Order No. 28 makes State C&D Plan official policy for executive branch in matters pertaining to land and water resource conservation
76-130	Establishes process for General Assembly recognition, adoption, and implementation of the State C&D Plan and provides commissioner of Planning and Energy Policy with overall supervision of process
77-614	Replaces commissioner of planning and energy policy with secretary of Office of Policy and Management (OPM) and requires State C&D Plan to be submitted directly to Committee on Planning and Development rather than to committee via intermediary agency, State Planning Council
79-402	Defines “plan” and adds details regarding interim changes to State C&D Plan
81-156	Provides for notice to municipal officials on proposed map changes and hearing on such changes in the municipality only at the request of such officials
83-203	Provides for plan revision every five years instead of every three years Provides that the plan apply to the acquisition of real property, development, or improvement of real property, acquisition of public transportation equipment or facilities, only when such costs are in excess of \$100,000 Provides that each state agency preparing a plan consider the State C&D Plan
89-331	Requires the secretary of OPM provide a statement rather than a report to state agencies commenting on the extent to which actions specified in P.A. 83-203 conform to the State C&D Plan
90-297	Requires an advisory statement rather than an advisory report from OPM to the State Bond Commission commenting on the extent to which an action is in conformity with the State C&D Plan
91-101	Requires State C&D Plan identify major transportation proposals identified in the master transportation plan
91-395	Provides actions by state agencies be consistent with the State C&D Plan (previously the plan was advisory)
95-240	Requires any project included in the first or second phase of UConn 2000 be part of the State C&D Plan
95-307	Extended deadline for plan revision to 1997
95-335	Added provisions regarding greenways
01-9, JSS	Extended deadline for plan revision to March 1, 2003
02-3	Added requirements requiring UConn to request and OPM to provide an advisory statement commenting on the extent the projects included in the third phase of UConn 2000 conform to the State C&D Plan, and submit it to the State Bond Commission, which must consider the statement prior to approving any bond funds.
03-4, JSS	Requires any revision to the State C&D Plan after August 20, 2003, take into account: 1) economic and community development needs and patterns of commerce; and 2) linkages of affordable housing objectives and land use objectives with transportation systems.
04-144	Requires plan revisions made after March 1, 2006 to: 1) take into consideration risks associated with natural hazards, including, but not limited to, flooding, high winds, and wildfires; 2) identify the potential impacts of natural hazards on infrastructure and property; and 3) make recommendations for the siting of future infrastructure and property development to minimize the use of areas prone to natural hazards, including, but not limited to flooding, high winds, and wildfires
04-248	Added provision requiring plan for 2004 – 2009 be submitted on or before December 1, 2004
05-205	Extended deadline for plan revision to March 1, 2009 Extended time for the Continuing Legislative Committee on State Planning and Development to hold public hearing from “within 35 days” to “not later than 45 days” after the General Assembly convenes, and requires committee to submit recommendation to approve or disapprove the plan not later than 45 days after completion of the public hearing

**Appendix C. Legislative Changes to Connecticut's
State Plan of Conservation and Development (State C&D Plan)**

<i>Public Act</i>	<i>Requirement</i>
05-205 (cont.)	<p>Requires plan revisions include: 1) areas where it is prudent and feasible (A) to have compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use development patterns and land reuse, and (B) to promote such development patterns and land reuse; 2) Priority funding areas; and (3) corridor management areas on either side of a limited access highway or rail line. In designating corridor management areas, the OPM secretary must make recommendations that: promote land use and transportation options to reduce the growth of traffic congestion; connect infrastructure and other development decisions; promote development that minimizes the cost of new infrastructure facilities and maximizes the use of existing infrastructure facilities; and increase intermunicipal and regional cooperation</p> <p>Requires regional planning organizations to revise their existing plans of development by July 1, 2008 and at least once every 10 years after that. Modifies the process for adopting these plans and requires them to: (1) identify any inconsistencies with six growth management principles, which are included in the current State Plan of C&D and (2) note on the record any inconsistencies with that plan and the reasons for them.</p> <p>Expands contents of local plans of C&D, requires them to address the same six principles, modifies the process for adopting the plans, and establishes a process under which anyone may request plan changes.</p> <p>Bars the environmental protection commissioner from denying a water quality permit based on the proposal's inconsistency with the plan.</p> <p>Removes provision in the legislative findings of the Water Diversion Policy Act that states that diversions shall only be permitted when consistent with the plan.</p>
06-24	<p>Limits applications for interim plan changes to the owner of the affected property and the chief elected official of the municipality. Prohibits applications for towns that do not have updated municipal plans of conservation and development. Requires application to include opinion of planning commission. Requires local planning commissions to: (1) send a copy of their municipal C&D plans to OPM within 60 days of their adoption and (2) include a description of any inconsistencies with the State C&D Plan</p>
07-239	<p>Establishes a Responsible Growth Task Force and specifies its membership. Requires the task force to: (1) identify responsible growth criteria and standards to guide the state's future investment decisions; and (2) study transfer of development rights laws, policies, and programs. Task force must report its recommendations to the governor by February 15, 2008. It will terminate on the day it submits the report.</p> <p>Raises the threshold of capital projects undertaken by state agencies that must be consistent with the State Plan of Conservation and Development to \$200,000. Imposes sanctions on municipalities that fail to amend their local plans of conservation and development every 10 years, as required by law.</p> <p>Requires the commissioner of economic and community development to prepare a State Economic Development Strategic Plan by July 1, 2009 and every five years thereafter.</p> <p>Requires regional plans of development to include a finding as to whether they are consistent with the State Economic Development Strategic Plan.</p> <p>Makes transportation one of the issues that Regional Councils of Elected Officials and Regional Councils of Governments must address.</p> <p>Establishes incentive grant program to encourage the provision of municipal services on a regional basis. Requires the OPM secretary to review, within available appropriations: (1) regional tax-based revenue sharing programs and (2) establishment of regional asset districts.</p>

JSS = June Special Session

Sources of data: Connecticut General Statutes, Public Acts, and Reports by Office of Legislative Research

APPENDIX D

Legislative Program Review & Investigations Committee Survey of Chief Elected Officials

1. Why is your town a member of a Regional Planning Organization (i.e., the Regional Council of Governments, Regional Council of Elected Officials, or Regional Planning Agency that operates in your area of the state)? (Please check all that apply.)		
	<i>Response Percent</i>	<i>Response Count</i>
Address issues that cross town boundaries	97.0%	96
Facilitate the sharing of services among towns	74.8%	74
Improve the way land use decisions are made	60.6%	60
Enable town to purchase an item with other towns that it could not afford to buy by itself	45.5%	45
Address concerns about environmental issues	57.6%	57
Make group purchases at a reduced price for specific items	43.4%	43
Other (please specify)	27.3%	27
answered question		99
skipped question		2

2. With respect to Regional Planning Organizations in Connecticut (i.e., the Regional Councils of Governments, Regional Councils of Elected Officials, and Regional Planning Agencies established in the 15 state-defined planning areas of the state), please indicate whether you agree or disagree that the functions of Regional Planning Organizations should be to:				
	Agree	Disagree	<i>Rating Average</i>	<i>Response Count</i>
Create and adopt regional plans of development	90.5% (86)	9.5% (9)	1.09	95
Assist with preparation of municipal plans of conservation and development	88.4% (84)	11.6% (11)	1.12	95
Assist in the development of zoning regulations for individual towns	74.4% (67)	25.6% (23)	1.26	90
Review and comment on proposed zone use or zone use changes within 500 feet of another town boundary	89.1% (82)	10.9% (10)	1.11	92
Review and comment on proposed subdivisions that abut or include land in two or more towns	91.3% (84)	8.7% (8)	1.09	92
Review and comment on LOCAL zoning projects with regional significance	92.3% (84)	7.7% (7)	1.08	91
Review and comment on STATE development projects that affect their regions	100% (95)	0% (0)	1.00	95
Create economic development strategies for their regions	91.4% (85)	8.6% (8)	1.09	93
Carry out transportation planning activities	99.0% (95)	1.0% (1)	1.01	96
Discuss affordable housing issues	82.2% (74)	17.8% (16)	1.18	90
Coordinate emergency management and homeland security efforts	85.9% (79)	14.1% (13)	1.14	92
Perform any tasks that member towns collectively choose	94.6% (87)	5.4% (5)	1.05	92
answered question				98
skipped question				3

3. With respect to conservation and development planning activities in Connecticut, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the statements below.				
	Agree	Disagree	<i>Rating Average</i>	<i>Response Count</i>
The STATE plan of conservation and development is used extensively to guide development in my town.	18.7% (17)	81.3% (74)	1.81	91
The REGIONAL plan of development for my area reflects the development issues in my town.	53.4% (84)	46.6% (41)	1.47	88
My TOWN'S plan of conservation and development is effective in guiding development within my town.	84.2% (80)	15.8% (15)	1.16	95
Development projects within a town should be required to comply with the STATE plan of conservation and development.	34.1% (29)	65.9% (56)	1.66	85
answered question				97
skipped question				4

4. With respect to Regional Planning Organizations in Connecticut (i.e., the Regional Councils of Governments, Regional Councils of Elected Officials, and Regional Planning Agencies established in the 15 state-defined planning areas of the state), please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the statements below.				
	Agree	Disagree	<i>Rating Average</i>	<i>Response Count</i>
Eligibility for membership in a Regional Planning Organization should be limited to the towns located within the state-defined boundaries for that planning region.	67.8% (59)	32.2% (28)	1.32	87
Chief elected officials should be required to serve on the board of the Regional Planning Organization in their area.	55.1% (49)	44.9% (40)	1.45	89
At least one individual serving on the board of a Regional Planning Organization should have planning experience.	64.0% (55)	36.0% (31)	1.36	86
As allowed under state law, the boundaries of the existing regional planning areas, which were developed in the 1950s and 1960s, should be re-evaluated periodically.	93.3% (83)	6.7% (6)	1.07	89
answered question				90
skipped question				11

5. Overall how would you describe the efforts of the Regional Planning Organization in your region (i.e., the Regional Council of Governments, Regional Council of Elected Officials, or Regional Planning Agency that operates in your area of the state) to meet the needs of your town?		
	<i>Response Percent</i>	<i>Response Count</i>
EXCELLENT	39.6%	36
GOOD	41.8%	38
FAIR	13.2%	12
POOR	5.5%	5
answered question		91
skipped question		10

6. What, if any, additional functions would you like the Regional Planning Organization in your region (i.e., the Regional Council of Governments, Regional Council of Elected Officials, or Regional Planning Agency that operates in your area of the state) to perform?		
		<i>Response Count</i>
		51
	answered question	51
	skipped question	50

7. Do you think the state of Connecticut should provide incentives to Regional Planning Organizations in Connecticut (i.e., the Regional Councils of Governments, Regional Councils of Elected Officials, and Regional Planning Agencies established in the 15 state-defined planning areas of the state) to encourage more regional cooperation?		
	<i>Response Percent</i>	<i>Response Count</i>
YES	87.0%	80
NO	13.0%	12
	answered question	92
	skipped question	9

8. What incentives could the state of Connecticut offer that would encourage your town to participate in more regional activities offered through Regional Planning Organizations (i.e., the Regional Councils of Governments, Regional Councils of Elected Officials, and Regional Planning Agencies established in the 15 state-defined planning areas of the state)?		
		<i>Response Count</i>
		66
	answered question	66
	skipped question	35

9. Which of the following purchasing opportunities does your town currently make use of? (Please check all that apply.)		
	<i>Response Percent</i>	<i>Response Count</i>
Purchase agreements and contracts negotiated by the state of Connecticut	92.1%	81
Cooperative purchasing opportunities offered by your own Regional Planning Organization (i.e., the Regional Council of Governments, Regional Council of Elected Officials, or Regional Planning Agency that operates in your area of the state)	50.0%	44
Cooperative purchasing programs operated by other Regional Planning Organizations	26.1%	23
Purchasing opportunities offered by organizations such as the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities or the Capitol Region Education Council	60.2%	53
Direct agreements with one or more towns	36.4%	32
Other (please specify)	10.2%	9
	answered question	88
	skipped question	13

10. In the future, would your town be interested in participating in any of the purchasing or service delivery opportunities listed below, if they were offered through a Regional Planning Organization (i.e., one of the Regional Councils of Governments, Regional Councils of Elected Officials, or Regional Planning Agencies established in the 15 state-defined planning areas of the state)? (Please check all that apply.)		
	<i>Response Percent</i>	<i>Response Count</i>
Buying equipment to be used by multiple towns	83.0%	73
Sharing personnel that would perform the same function for multiple towns	78.4%	69
Developing model contract language that could be adopted separately by multiple towns	73.9%	65
Sharing the use and expenses of recreational facilities located in another town	60.2%	53
Participating in cooperative purchasing programs	92.1%	81
Other (please specify)	6.8%	6
answered question		88
skipped question		13

Programs per Town

- 33 to 46 (48)
- 47 to 54 (48)
- 55 to 65 (32)
- 66 to 94 (41)

Voluntary Inter-Municipal Cooperative Programs

Source: ACIR, *Local Government Cooperative Ventures in Connecticut* (June 2000)

Appendix F

Comparison of Selected State Grant Programs for Sharing or Consolidating Municipal Services

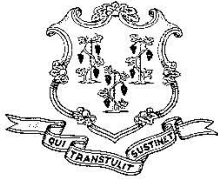
Grant	Maine: Efficient Delivery of Local and Regional Services (30-A § 6201)	New Jersey: SHARE Program (N.J. Rev. Stat. 40:8B-14) *	New York: Shared Municipal Services Incentive Program (2006 N.Y. Laws Chapter 50)	Pennsylvania: Shared Municipal Services Program (12 P.A. Code §119)
Year Started	FY 05	FY 04	FY 06	FY 69
Total Funding	FY 05: \$1 million FY 06: \$0 FY 07: \$500,000	FY 05: \$4.2 million FY 06: \$4.2 million FY 07: \$4.2 million	FY 06: \$2.75 million FY 07: \$25.7 million	FY 05: \$1.5 million FY 06: \$1.4 million FY 07: \$2.4 million
Eligible Governments	Municipalities, counties, and regional government agencies	Municipalities, counties, fire districts, and nonprofit organizations that coordinate regional services	Counties, municipalities, and school and special taxing districts	Municipalities and councils of government (COGs)
Eligible Activities and Grant Amounts	Maximum \$200,000 grants for joint projects that reduce costs and spending, deliver services more efficiently, or improve their quality and quantity	Maximum \$20,000 grants with 10% local match for service sharing or consolidation feasibility studies Maximum \$200,000 grants (no local match) to cover start-up, transition, and implementation of cost sharing or consolidating services Maximum \$300,000 annual grants to counties for planning and implementing shared services with towns or regional nonprofit organizations	Maximum \$200,000 grants for feasibility studies and plans to share, consolidate merge, or dissolve services Maximum \$300,000 grants to two or more highway departments for sharing contractual services, making joint purchases or mutually beneficial capital improvements, or consolidating operations Maximum \$1 million grants for counties developing countywide shared service plans Maximum \$500,000 grants to two or more towns for reducing health insurance costs. Eligible projects include creating local health care consortiums, joining state health insurance program, and employee cost sharing Maximum \$2 million matching grants for consolidation or merger cost savings	50% matching grants to cover towns' administrative costs of (1) forming a COG or (2) jointly performing a municipal service
Administering Agency	Department of Administrative and Financial Services	Department of Community Affairs	Department of State	Department of Community and Economic Development

*SHARE is a component of the older Regional Efficiency and Development Incentive Program.

Source: Office of Legislative Research, 2007-R-0047, *Grants for Consolidating Municipal Services*, Attachment 1.

APPENDIX G

AGENCY RESPONSES



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

January 23, 2008

Senator Edward Meyer and Representative Julia B. Wasserman
Co-Chairs
Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee
State Capitol Building
Room 506
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Dear Senator Meyer and Representative Wasserman:

Thank you for providing the Office of Policy and Management with an opportunity to review and comment on the Program Review and Investigations Committee's draft final report on Connecticut's Regional Planning Organizations. Committee staff is to be congratulated for the professional manner in which it was researched and written.

I have attached for your review and consideration, OPM's response to four of the recommendations articulated in your Committee's report. Should you or your staff have any questions regarding these responses, please contact me at 418-6484.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "W. David LeVasseur", written over a light blue circular stamp.

W. David LeVasseur
Undersecretary
Office of Policy and Management

**OPM Responses to Recommendations
in
the Program Review and Investigations Committee's Draft Final Report
on
Regional Planning Organizations**

LPRI Recommendation #5 - RPO Boundaries Analysis

The report recommends that the Office of Policy and Management review and conduct an analysis of Regional Planning Organization boundaries and adopt new boundaries, if appropriate. Numerous factors would be brought into this analysis, including housing patterns, employment levels, commuting patterns, traffic patterns and environmental considerations. The report recommends that OPM complete this analysis by October 1, 2009.

While OPM agrees with the committee that a review of Regional Planning Organization boundaries is warranted, we find the suggested timeframe problematic if the committee envisions that this task will be accomplished utilizing existing OPM staff. The same staff who would be assigned responsibility for this review and analysis would be the same staff tasked with working on the State Plan of Conservation and Development.

The next statutorily mandated iteration of the State Plan of Conservation and Development is required to be completed by the 2010 legislative session of the General Assembly. This update typically consumes all available staff time for approximately two years and may, in fact, require even more time as a number of additional responsibilities have been placed on OPM which must be included while developing the next iteration of the plan. We would, therefore, request that the deadline for this review and analysis be moved back to October 1, 2011 in order to allow sufficient time for the review and analysis after the adoption of the next iteration of the State Plan of Conservation and Development.

If the committee believes that this review and analysis should occur sooner, it will be necessary for OPM to engage the services of a consultant and additional funds would have to be appropriated in the biennial budget for this purpose.

LPRI Recommendation #6 – Revision of State Plan of Conservation and Development

OPM appreciates the committee's desire to better link planning and funding decisions, and to measure the state's progress in implementing C&D Plan policies. We believe that through the development of certain benchmarks associated with the statutory growth management principles, there may be opportunities for the state, regional planning organizations, and municipalities to

measure their progress in implementing their respective plans of conservation and development.

However, OPM does not believe it would be practical or productive to focus on the Plan's 46 policies as the vehicle to set overall priorities, estimate levels of funding, identify potential funding sources, set timeframes for implementation, or identify the entities responsible for implementation. All state agencies are required to abide by the Plan, and it would not be reasonable to expect each agency to assign the same priority to Plan policies given their wide-ranging missions.

In addition to the 46 policies in the C&D Plan text, the Plan's Locational Guide Map also provides 8 locational policies. This relationship between general planning policies and locational policies requires a comprehensive analysis which does not lend itself well to simple numeric weighting. OPM also believes that it would be problematic to estimate the level of funding needed to implement individual policies because these policies are not associated with discreet time periods. Furthermore, any attempt to identify potential sources of funding to implement each of the 46 policies would be complicated by the nature of the biennial budget cycle relative to the five-year C&D Plan cycle.

LPRI Recommendation #7 – Criteria for Uniform Review of Regional Plans

This report recommends that OPM develop criteria for the uniform review of Regional Plans of Development in order to determine whether they are consistent with the State Plan of Conservation and Development.

While OPM agrees with the committee that developing such criteria is warranted and would be helpful, as was the case with Recommendation Five, we find the suggested timeframe problematic if the committee envisions that this task will be accomplished utilizing existing OPM staff. The same staff who would be assigned responsibility for developing these criteria would also be the staff tasked with working on the State Plan of Conservation and Development.

As noted above, the next statutorily mandated iteration of the State Plan of Conservation and Development is required to be completed by the 2010 legislative session of the General Assembly. This update typically consumes all available staff time for approximately two years and may, in fact, require even more time as a number of additional responsibilities have been placed on OPM which must be included while developing the next iteration of the plan. We would, therefore, request that the deadline for this review and analysis be set no earlier than October 1, 2011 to allow sufficient time for the review and analysis after the adoption of the next iteration of the State Plan of Conservation and Development.

If the committee believes that this review and analysis should occur sooner, it will be necessary for OPM to engage the services of a consultant and additional funds would have to be appropriated in the biennial budget for this purpose.

LPRI Recommendation #10 – Regional Performance Incentive Program

OPM supports the Committee's recommendation regarding this important program. Because of the Agency's close involvement with the administration of the program, review of the various proposals submitted and interaction and follow up with the participating Regional Planning Organizations throughout the process, OPM proposes, for consideration by the General Assembly, the following modifications to enhance the program's operation and objectives.

OPM Suggested Program Modification 1

Amend Section 8(b) to allow more time for the Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs) to coordinate with their member towns in preparing proposals. In some instances, proposals supported by incumbents prior to the election were not supported by newly elected chief elected officials. Six months or more of lead time would encourage more thorough analysis and preparation of more innovative service sharing proposals. Also, November 6, 2007 was the date for most municipal elections in Connecticut and the proposals were due at OPM the first week in December. In some instances, proposals that were supported by sitting incumbents were not supported by the newly elected chief elected officials.

OPM Suggested Program Modification 2

Amend Section 8(b) to open up the language that allows for submittal of proposals for joint provision of a service(s) that are currently provided by a municipality within a region, to any service(s) whether currently provided or not and any planning studies regarding joint provision of such a service(s). This should serve to increase program innovation.

OPM Suggested Program Modification 3

Amend Section 8(c) to give the same priority consideration to proposals that are submitted by Regional Councils of Elected Officials (RCEOs) and Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs), as is given to proposals that are submitted by Regional Councils of Governments (RCOG), when the proposals involve participation of at least 50% of RPO member municipalities.

RCEOs encompass 34 municipalities with a total population of 588,358. RPAs encompass 38 municipalities with a total population of 1,075,587. Combined, these organizations encompass 72 towns with a total population of 1,645,945 – 47% of the total population of the state.

The duties and responsibilities of RCEOs and RPAs are virtually the same as those of RCOGs. The priority preference given to RCOGs seems to have discouraged other types of RPOs from participating in the program.

By giving priority consideration to all three types of RPOs, the emphasis is placed upon innovation and the number of municipalities served rather than the type of RPO involved.

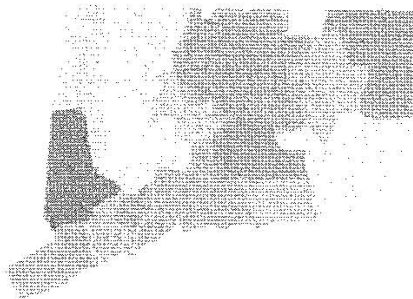
OPM Suggested Program Modification 4

Modify the language in Section 8(c) requiring a proposal to include a resolution endorsing such proposal from the legislative body of each municipality affected by the proposal to allow the Board of Selectmen to be the legislative body in those municipalities that have a town meeting form of government.

This would allow for municipal endorsement of the proposal without the time and expense of holding a town meeting. OPM was informed by the RPOs that requiring municipalities to hold town meetings was costly, unduly burdensome and required so much time that many municipalities had to hold them after the grant proposals were submitted.

LPRI Recommendations #1, #2, #3, #4, #8 and #9

OPM supports these recommendations.



**CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF
REGIONAL PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS**

January 22, 2008

Senator Edward Meyer and Representative Julia B. Wasserman
Co-Chairs
Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee
State Capitol – Room 506
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Co-Chairs:

I am responding on behalf of the Connecticut Association of Regional Planning Organizations (CARPO) to the LPRIC's study of *Connecticut's Regional Planning Organizations*. CARPO members consist of the executive directors of the fifteen regional planning organizations in Connecticut. Despite some differences among directors on the recommendations of the study, we can comfortably speak with a single voice concerning the major points of the study as a whole.

CARPO members appreciate the effort that was made by LPRIC and its staff to document the history and functions of the fifteen RPOs. A lot of material was gathered in a very short time. The study recognizes the value of regional organizations and acknowledges that they can have a very substantial role in Connecticut's future government structure. CARPO is also very pleased that the study findings recognize that there is great diversity among regions, and that one size or model does not necessarily "fit all". Each region has evolved to meet the needs of its member towns, which vary with the character of each region. We believe that a study of potential future regional boundaries, as recommended in the program review report, may be appropriate. Much time and change has occurred since the original regions were formed. OPM is the proper agency to conduct such a study, as well as to identify the criteria that should be considered in delineating regions. We note that there is not a need for urgency to do such a study, however, since the current structure is functioning and has functioned well for several decades.

CT Association of RPOs (CARPO)

Tel: 203 234 7555

Fax: 203 234 9850

Judy Gott, Chairman

Email: jgott@scrcog.org

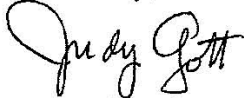
Page 1

Senator Edward Meyer and Representative Julia B. Wasserman
Co-Chairs
Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee
Page 2

The Committee's study focused on the RPOs for their potential as an implementing network for state agency programs such as transportation planning and emergency management, and for more consistent planning among levels of government. This was certainly timely, since there appears to be a growing interest from state agencies in using regional organizations as a conduit for information from the state to the towns. LPRIC staff devoted far less time to examining the regional organizations from the opposite perspective, which is from the towns' point-of-view. RPOs are also a "congress" of towns, where neighbors raise issues of common interest and address them collectively, or at least share information on possible solutions. It is this role that has created many of the differences among regional organizations today, as each organization sought solutions specific to its needs. When considering the future role of regional agencies and the configuration of regional boundaries, it is our hope that the Legislature will not overlook the local focus which has led to many creative cooperative ventures, tailored to the needs of a particular region.

Thank you for all the hard work.

Sincerely,



Judy Gott, Chairman CARPO

For the Membership: Executive Directors
Lyle Wray, Capitol Region COG
Carl Stephani, Central CT RPA
Linda Krause, CT River Estuary RPA
Peter Dorpalen, COG of Central Naugatuck Valley
James Wang, Greater Bridgeport RPA
Jonathan Chew, Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials
Richard Lynn, Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials
Geoffrey Colegrove, Midstate RPA
John Filchak, Northeastern CT COG
Dan McGuinness, Northwestern CT COG
Judy Gott, SC Regional COG
James Butler, Southeastern CT COG
Floyd Lapp, South Western RPA
Richard Dunne, Valley COG
Mark Paquette, Windham Region COG